

Friends of the ABC

Blue Mountains Region March 2009

From the President

Our planning workshop at the Grandview on February 21 confirmed much of what we do as a branch and pointed to some changes. Your executive committee reviewed the workshop output and asked me to write the following summary and its recommendations.

Our public forums with guest speakers and our FABC stalls at community fairs had universal support, as did our monthly newsletter.

There was however a sense that asking people at the fairs to sign letters to the Minister and/or Chair of ABC Board should be reconsidered as the focus of our engaging with the public, but the letter to the Minister drafted for the purpose last year was a backup pending a decision on this. Underlying factors were an expectation of better ABC/government relations and support for lobbying focused on local politicians and liaison with ABC management. A 'lobbying working group' in lieu of our existing 'letter writing working group' might be more appropriate in future.

It was thought too that there was no longer a need for a 'stalls working group' at monthly meetings and the mechanics of organizing the stalls could be handled in general business. It was noted that our stall at the 2008 Glenbrook fair was cancelled for lack of volunteers and that manning the two stalls at Springwood and Katoomba was probably an appropriate 'upper/lower mountains' spread and workload.

Our success in attracting speakers and audiences to our public forums was applauded and the need for a 'forums working group' confirmed. There was support for the idea that a focus at some meetings/forums be on learning how to access the new media (podcasting, iview, digital set-top boxes, HDTV etc) and about what is involved in making TV and radio programs.

Networking with like-minded organizations emerged as a workshop theme, as to a lesser extent did a desire for more social interaction within the branch, at the monthly meetings for example. A particular aspect of the networking theme was a need to engage with younger people. A 'community engagement and networking working group' that identifies target groups, prioritises them and mobilizes our effort to engage them was envisaged as a response.

Given this scenario the executive committee recommends as a way forward:

1. That the 'forums working group' be retained and asked to take into account the idea of learning how to access the new media and about what is involved in making TV and radio programs.

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Next Meeting:

Planning a program for the year.

**Where: Grand View Hotel
Wentworth Falls**

When: Saturday March 21

Time: 10.00am



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'

FABC Committee

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2. That the 'stalls working group' be disbanded and the mechanics of organizing them be handled in general business; that there be two stalls in 2009, at Springwood and Katoomba; and the letter to the Minister drafted for the purpose in 2008 be the default means of engaging the public at the stalls pending a decision on an alternative.
3. That a 'community engagement/networking group' be formed to identify like-minded groups, prioritise them and mobilize our effort to engage them; bearing in mind our desire to interact with younger people.
4. That consideration be given to disbanding the 'letter-writing working group' in lieu of a 'lobbying working group' that incorporates letter writing into the broader role of our lobbying on behalf of the ABC, bearing in mind the perceived desirability of focusing on local politicians and liaising with ABC management. This new working group if formed to take the lead on devising an alternative to 'letters to the Minister' as the focus of engaging with the public at the FABC stalls.
5. That the 'pros and cons' of restructuring monthly meetings to enable more social interaction be considered, and ideas for generating more interaction be canvassed eg an occasional lunch at the Grandview after a monthly meeting.

The meeting on March 21 provides us with the opportunity to consider these recommendations and we look forward to seeing you there.

Cheers, Bob Macadam

New ABC Board Appointment Process Announced

MEDIA RELEASE

Senator Stephen Conroy

Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Measures to ensure strong and independent national broadcasters

The Rudd Government today announced a public consultation and new board appointment processes to ensure the future strength and independence of Australia's national broadcasters.

"For the next two months, the Australian public will have its say on how the ABC and SBS are positioned for the next decade," the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy said.

"The ABC and the SBS are two of Australia's most important and loved public institutions. They have

entertained, educated and informed generations of Australians. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure their future strength and independence."

The Government has released a discussion paper, *ABC and SBS: Towards a Digital Future*, canvassing some of the key issues facing the two broadcasters during the next decade.

"Australians are passionate about their national broadcasters and I expect there to be some strong views about ensuring the ABC and SBS are well placed to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the emerging digital, online and global media environment," Senator Conroy said.

The Rudd Government will also restore independence to the ABC and SBS Boards. The Government is today calling for applications from Australians to fill four vacancies on the Boards. Applications will be assessed on merit by a Nomination Panel established at arms-length from the Minister.

"For too long the process of appointing directors to the ABC and SBS Boards has been open to political interference. It is time to restore independence," Senator Conroy said.

"The new selection process will ensure that all future appointments to the ABC and SBS Boards are conducted in a manner that fosters independence, transparency, accountability and public confidence."

The Government will also reinstate the position of staff-elected director on the ABC Board.

"The position of staff-elected Director makes an important contribution to the ABC's independence by providing the Board with a unique and important insight into ABC operations," Senator Conroy said.

Discussions on the future of the national broadcasters formed part of the agenda at the Australia 2020 Summit, held in Canberra in April 2008. The Rudd Government now wants to extend that dialogue to the wider Australia community.

The outcomes of the public consultation will be considered by the Government ahead of the next three-year funding round for national broadcasters, which commences in July 2009. The outcomes will also contribute to policy decisions for the long-term future of national broadcasting.

Further information about the merit-based appointments process is available from the Department of Broadband, Communication and the Digital Economy's website (www.dbcde.gov.au/media_broadcasting/abc_and_sbs/abc_and_sbs_board_appointments).

