

# COWPER UPDATES

Friends of the ABC in Cowper

No.5.

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**H**i, Friends of the ABC,  
It has been some time since we produced a Cowper Update, as both Tony and myself were going to the Regional Conference in Wollongong I felt it would be wise to hold the paper back for another month, due to all the news that we would have to tell you. It was an exceptional Conference, with a very positive attitude led very ably by NSW FABC President Mal Hewitt.



MAL HEWITT

The most important news is that Tony's Cowper's motion, in regard to the Peak Body and its structure was passed with minor amendments. At the Conference there were delegates from ACT and South Australian branch who also supported this motion. We also passed around another paper to all the delegates regarding efforts to recruit more Friends to the ABC. It was well received and we hope delegates will go home and study it.

The highlight of the Conference was the keynote speaker, Managing Director of the ABC Mr Mark Scott. His presentation was impressive, and his answers to our well researched questions were direct, and we gained the impression that he is both proud of the ABC and its achievements, very defensive of criticism and fully committed to preserving its status free from political or commercial influence. I think we all came away impressed and thankful that the ABC is well managed.



Mal Hewitt introducing ABC Managing Director : Mark Scott.

There was a presentation from Jill Greenwell President of ACT Branch, who has worked in Parliament House. She gave a 'timeline' for the Friends of the ABC's Triennial Funding action plan.

You will find more articles throughout your Cowper Update in relation to the Conference and topics discussed. Enjoy, Martin.

## STOP PRESS

**His opening remarks, which ABC management have now censored and expunged from the program (he has been suspended from air) were very critical of Sue Howard, ABC's Director of Radio. Steven went on to inform R.N. listeners that the following programs would be scrapped: *The Religion Report, The Media Report, The Sports Factor, Radio Eye, The Ark, In Conversation, Perspective, Short Story (remains on air with no new production), Street Stories.* These programs are 'flagship' programs! Con-**

# DEDICATED DIGITAL CHILDREN'S CHANNEL

Last year the Coalition Government in the lead up to the 2007 election promised funding to the ABC to set up a dedicated digital children's channel. It is in our children's and grandchildren's interest that we mount a campaign to bring pressure on the present Labour Government to support the ABC in its Triennial Funding to set up such a channel.

Research has shown that in most cases the commercial networks use their children's channels to sell inappropriate food items, toys, games, I.T. items etc. We know how impressionable children are.

In September 2007 Simon Canning wrote in the Australian a history of the problems that the ABC were having in a dedicated children's channel:

*FOUR years after it closed its children's digital television channels, Fly TV and ABC Kids, the ABC has called for the creation of another dedicated children's digital channel, possibly funded through trade-offs with the commercial networks.*

*The call comes in the ABC's submission to the review of children's TV standards that is under way. The submission is one of 70 received by the Australian Communications and Media Authority from the likes of Mars, the Confectionery Manufacturers Association, the Australian Toy Association, Unilever and DDB, the advertising agency that handles McDonald's.*

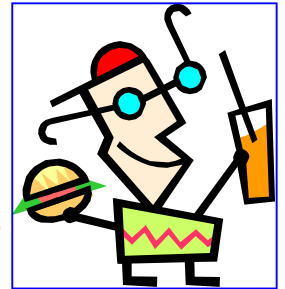
*The ABC cut its dedicated children's digital channels in 2003 in a bid to save \$7 million.*

*The move came under heavy criticism from parent groups but was defended by then managing director Russell Balding, who said the internally funded channels had run out of money.*

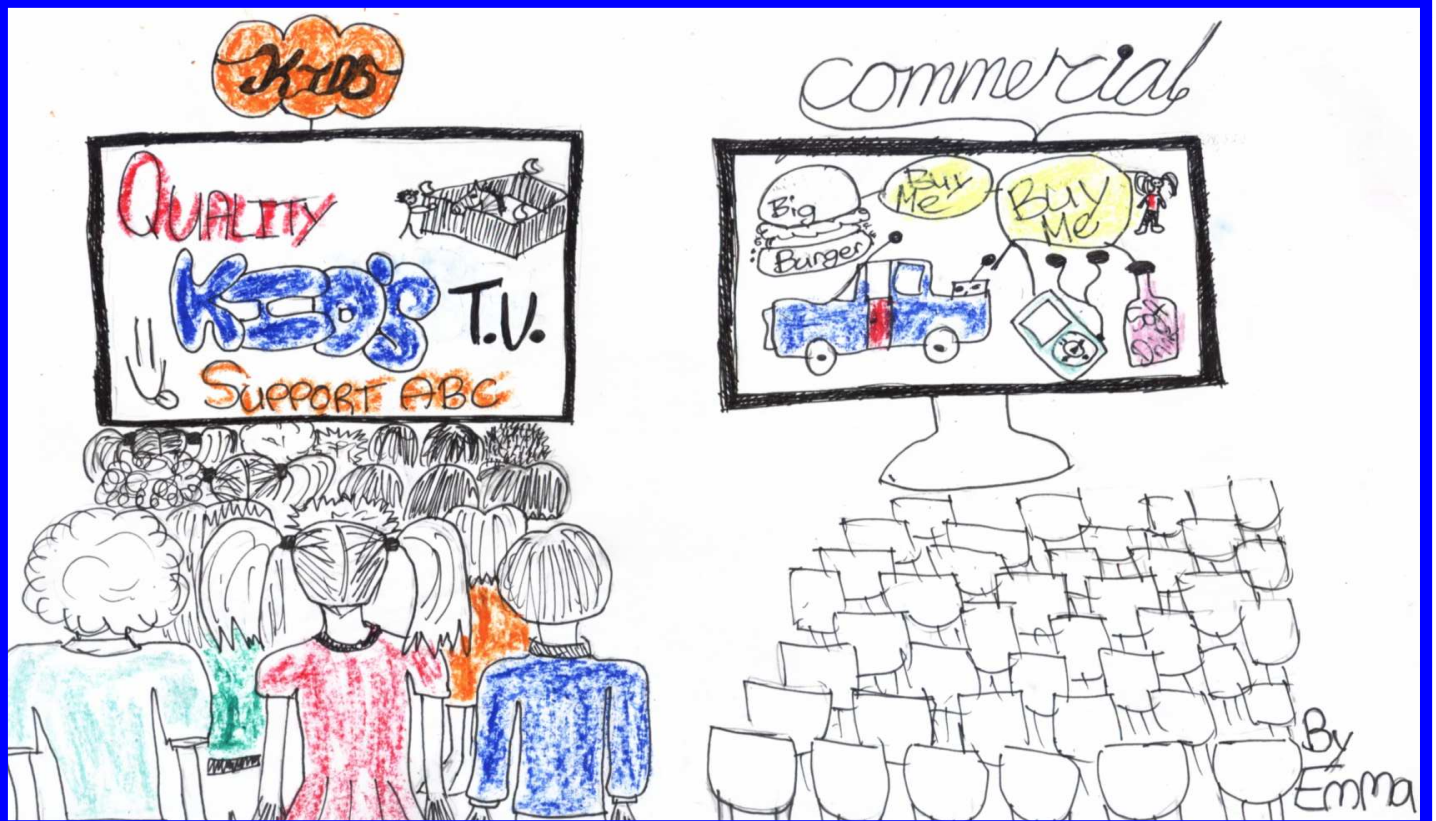
*The ABC has made the call for a children's digital channel free of commercial messages in concert with the Australian Children's Television Foundation.*

*ABC director of television Kim Dalton said the creation of the station was vital if the ABC is to stem the tide of children moving to subscription TV stations such as Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network and Disney. "If Australian children and parents are to have access to Australian programs in the developing digital en-*

*(Continued on page 4)*



CARTOON BY EMMA: We must all lobby our local Member and Senators in NSW in getting funding for a dedicated children's digital channel! We must put an end to using children's television content for commercial gain. EDITOR.





# TONY TALKS

**A**t the recent FABC State Conference in Wollongong there was considerable discussion about ABC's triennial funding. Any increase in this funding will be announced in the budget in August 2009, but deliberations pertaining to funding are of course, already happening and may provide us with an opportunity to raise public awareness of this process in the period from now until early next year when the decisions will have been taken.

Cowper delegates were somewhat disappointed at the lack of enthusiasm from the Conference towards widening our lobbying approach to include related issues and other small public interest lobby groups as outlined in Cowper's presentation to the Conference and sent out recently to branch members. Both Martin and I received good support in individual discussions with other delegates concerning our proposal, but there was no support from the executive or on the conference floor, the proposal being seen as too big and too difficult for our organization as it now exists. There are only 2300 FABC members state-wide, and faced with having to compete with large professional and industry lobby groups, the Government's own PR machine wanting to control information and a lack of interest in the ABC from the opposition. We think it is inevitable that we will need to move our lobbying efforts to be more directed toward the public and less reliant on direct approaches to ministers and politicians. To successfully lobby the politicians we need to show that we can successfully engage the community. We left the Conference feeling that with a 'peak body' in place a more substantial lobbying effort might be possible in the future, and we were inclined to want to continue to expand our efforts as outlined.

The 'peak body' proposal put to the Conference was more successful and was accepted by the Conference with minimal but important changes. The significant change is in paragraph 3 of the draft where 'consensus' is replaced by 'majority'. There will however, be substantial difficulty in having the proposal adopted by some states, as significant divisions exist between some state branch executives. The Conference resolved to attempt to include all state FABC's, but if the existing differences prove intractable, to move to a peak body representing cooperating states as a first step towards an eventual truly National Council.

Commentators are suggesting that, with the obvious constraints on the next budget ( 3 billion lost through measures opposed in the Senate, slowing economy, money for compensating effects of an ETS etc) any new funding for the ABC will be hard won. There has emerged however one opportunity with real public appeal, for which the ABC itself is pushing hard in its funding submission and which the conference enthusiastically supported and that is the funding of a dedicated kids TV channel. Cowper FABC may well be in a particularly useful position in this regard, having a National Party local Member and bearing in mind that the Howard government just prior to the last election, undertook to fund such a channel if re-elected. It may then be possible for us to encourage the local member to support any public interest that we can generate in a dedicated kids channel and perhaps even raise the issue in Parliament. To this effect our committee has resolved to embark on a campaign of raising community awareness of the urgent need for and real benefits of, a dedicated kids channel. This channel would contain 'home grown' Australian product, be free of advertising and its programming would take into consideration current knowledge of early childhood learning. At our recent committee meeting it was resolved to commence a letter writing campaign aimed at interesting the community in such a channel and combining this with a forum addressed by one or more local experts on early child hood learning and the importance of appropriate, good quality, advertising free television. If we are able to generate broad public interest in the proposal we may elicit a response from our local politicians, which might in turn help to focus the Governments attention on ABC funding at least adequate to establishing such a TV channel.

(Continued from page 2)

*vironment, ABC TV believes a dedicated, commercial-free Australian children's channel is an integral part of the solution," Mr Dalton said.*

*"This means ensuring children have access to the best locally made programming, ensuring that safe and secure environments are provided for Australian children and their families. Australian children should expect to see and hear places and voices that are familiar to them on television, and in the absence of children's content requirements there is unlikely to be a significant level of Australian children's programs broadcast." (Source: The Australian, September 6, 2007 Simon Canning)*

We can see from some of the organizations that submitted submissions that they are purely commercial enterprises. We have to ask "Who can we trust with our children's early education?"

This year saw an article in the Sydney Morning Herald regards the new government and funding for a dedicated children's channel.

*The ABC was forced to shelve its plans to launch the children's channel, ABC3, this year as the Rudd Government would only commit to fulfilling election promises in its first budget. The former Coalition government had vowed to give \$82 million for the channel over four years, but Labor never made a commitment. Except for the international channel, ABC6, the new digital channels would source at least half of their content from Australia. For the education channel, ABC5, the broadcaster would work with schools, universities, authorities and think tanks to provide English tuition and study material. The news channel would compete with the pay TV channel Sky News, providing news updates and live feeds. (Source: Sydney Morning Herald, Miriam Steffens, April 17, 2008)*

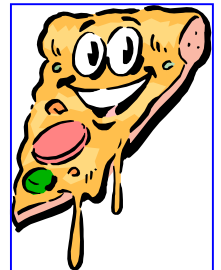
The article below shows why we MUST have a dedicated ABC Digital Children's Channel. The full article can be read here: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/diet/junk-food-ads-to-stay-regulator/2008/08/27/1219516565247.html> in which you will find how powerful the "junk food" and other industries are. I have taken important paragraphs out to show you that if we do not do something to change this trend, children will be No .1. in the obesity race. We all know that they are heading rapidly towards the finishing line.



### Junk food ads to stay: regulator

(Source: Sydney Morning Herald: Kelly Burke Consumer Affairs Reporter, August 28, 2008)

- THE government communications regulator has delivered a victory to the junk food industry by deciding not to impose further restrictions on advertising during children's television hours.
- The decision has prompted an avalanche of criticism from health and community groups, which have been lobbying the Australian Communications and Media Authority for more than two years to ban the promotion of junk food to children on television.
- More than half of the 76 submissions had argued for tighter restrictions or an outright ban on junk food advertising to children.
- The Coalition on Food Advertising to Children, which represents more than a dozen medical and nutritional authorities including the Australian Medical Association, Cancer Council Australia, the Public Health Association of Australia and the main bodies representing dentists and GPs, has slammed the draft report as a major setback in the battle against childhood obesity.
- Its chairwoman, Kathy Chapman, said the code failed to protect children from junk food commercials that promote fatty and unhealthy foods which fuel increasing obesity levels.
- "It's plain common sense ... the manufacturers wouldn't spend millions of dollars every year advertising to children if it didn't work," she said.



If after 2 years the Australian Communications and Media Authority do not understand that they are there to protect, amongst their other duties, the health of our children, then they should go. After this appalling decision it is even more imperative that we lobby for a dedicated ABC Children's Channel. EDITOR.

# *Jottings from the 2008 State Conference*

**T**ony, Jo, Glenda and Martin represented FABC (Friends of the ABC) in Cowper at the State Conference in Wollongong, over the weekend of the 9th and 10th of August. This was the second conference that we had attended, this time we felt we were better prepared.

Over the months leading up to the Conference, Tony had been lobbying the executive of FABC (NSW) concerning the merits, structure and implementation of a "Peak Body". Your committee had been discussing this dilemma for close on a year, that FABC were not going to be effective unless they formed a Peak Body that spoke as "one voice". This view was formed due to the way the Government 'managed' their responses to opposition, enquiries, letters to M.Ps., and Ministers. You would always get back the 'form letter' promising the world....looking into it.... it's going into budget estimates.....etc, etc.

Every day Parliament sits, there are 37 plane loads of "suits" arriving at Canberra Airport to lobby politicians. These people represent organization ranging from charities, medical disorders, volunteer organizations to big business. It was time that FABC, who are often referred to as 'Aunties Nieces and Nephews', shrugged off this image and became more professional in the way they articulate our values on behalf of OUR ABC. With the support of Mal Hewett and the executive, Cowper's proposal was put to the meeting on the



Saturday with further discussion on the Sunday. With minor changes it was accepted by NSW, ACT and South Australia Branches. Over the next few weeks it will go out to the other states for comment.

The Conference was opened by Mal Hewett with a wide ranging and far reaching introduction to all things ABC. Some of the topics that Mal spoke about were:

- Free to air T.V.....the commercial channels are on the way out
- Sydney Piano Competition went out all over Australia and the World....the first time this has happened
- Technology is keeping the overheads of the ABC down
- We ALL need to support the ABC in it's submission on Triennial Funding (see article page .6.)

## BRANCH REPORTS:

The Branches that were represented were Hunter, Illawarra, Mid North Coast, Cowper, North Coast, Orange, Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Australian Capitol Territory and South Australia. It was very interesting to hear how they operate and get the message out. Branch numbers range from a few dozen to a couple of hundred and some others Branches are in decline. Some, especially the Branches near Sydney, have ABC personalities to speak to members and the public. They are very generous with their time and are very supportive. Some of the personalities were Chris Masters, Geraldine Douge, Tim Palmer, Liz Jackson, Fran Kelly, Hugh Mackay, Monica Attard, Bruce Elder, Richard Moorcroft, Blue the Shearer, Kerry O'Brian. Depending on the speaker they can get over 300 people attending.

Some of the activities they spoke about were; 'Politics in the Pub' (these were very popular in the Hunter area and Sydney) Coffee mornings (usually weekends), stalls at markets, fêtes with ABC products. It was noted that merchandise is falling off, although Bananas without Pajamas was one of the most popular T-Shirts. One group uses helium filled balloons, with a message like "Join friends of the ABC", on one side and say "Support a Kid's Channel". The children love them and your message goes everywhere.

A lot of the Branches complained that they were treated like lepers when they approached their local ABC station. Some station Mangers were very helpful but they were few and far between. Some were quiet

*(Continued on page 9)*

# HAVE YOUR SAY!

**B**elow you will find two links. These links are very important to all Friends of the ABC, it gives everyone a chance to have their say on what we want and what we think is appropriate for both the ABC and SBS.

Your committee will be putting in a submission to this enquiries. Have a look here:-



Australian Government  
Department of Broadband,  
Communications and the Digital Economy

[http://www.dbcde.gov.au/media\\_broadcasting/consultation\\_and\\_submissions/abc\\_sbs\\_review](http://www.dbcde.gov.au/media_broadcasting/consultation_and_submissions/abc_sbs_review)

This particular submission is run by the Australian Government.

If you go to this web site:- <http://www.abc.net.au/corp/haveyoursay/> you will obtain some background material from the ABC on their "Towards a Digital Future". **HAVE YOUR SAY!**

 ABC Have Your Say

## **"CHRISTMAS GET TOGETHER" SUNDAY 7th DECEMBER**

**Tony and Jo's farm  
660 BELLINGEN ROAD, BOWRAVILLE.**

**BRING A FRIEND**

**BRING A PLATE (talk to Jo)**

**BYO-BRING YOUR OWN GROG**

**From 12.00. RSVP 30/11/08, Jo 6564 7440**

**Come along and have a relaxing afternoon in good company and beautiful surroundings.**

**(At the intersection into Bowraville take the road to the right, north, 6½ kilometers you will find the entrance to the farm)**

# Letters on Radio National

Dear ABC Managers Scott, Howard and Connors

**I write to tell you all that I am absolutely appalled by the ABC Management's actions in this matter of the Religion Report and Stephen Crittenden's on-air comments and his subsequently being stood down.**

**I regard the arguments behind the decision to axe the Religion Report as being seriously uninformed and grossly insulting to the over-60s listening audience like me.**

**I regard the action taken towards Crittenden as being fascist and dictatorial, and absolutely contrary to the principles of fairness and openness that are the hallmarks of the ABC's long and illustrious history in this country.**

**I demand that this matter be resolved according to reasonable standards of decorum and fairness - first, by immediately reinstating Crittenden to his post, and second by revisiting and reassessing the arguments that led to the original decision to axe this unique, top-quality, immensely valuable and informative Radio National program.**

Lee Andresen (Atheist)

Dr Lee W Andresen

Dear Mr Scott

I have been wanting to write to you for some days about the proposed changes to Radio National programming. Apologies that my points are not arranged more incisively but I am so enraged at the bullying tactics you seem to be using to silence staff within the ABC, that I have to write immediately. I am copying this letter to various people because I haven't time to write to them all individually. This is an attempt to get you to listen to us! It was already outrageous and absolutely not in the public interest that you censored Stephen Crittenden's remarks so that people could no longer listen to them on the ABC website. Now you have suspended Stephen, pending investigation. Of what? Suspected free speech?

What is the point of asking people if they want to go (from the website) to Access ABC - your pass inside the ABC? Are you going to tell us what's happening to the programs we lost and are you going to explain why we're losing them? Are you going to justify what's happening to Critto? What will happen to Media Watch?

RN is currently spruiking the survey which is on the ABC website (copy attached) for those who may not have seen it). Until I read the survey, my first thought was: why are the programming changes happening before the results of the survey are out? Now it's obvious! What exactly does this survey have to do with what we may like or dislike about the RN programs? It seems to take for granted that the medium is the message because it only wants to know how we listen to RN and not why. Radio National has a wide and I believe representative range of programs.

Among the best, in my view are the weekday reports - Health, Religion, Media, Law, and the Sports Factor and programs like In Conversation and Street stories, The Science Show, All in the Mind, The Planet etc etc. In case you are interested in how and when some of us listen to RN, here's a snapshot: There are two of us in this household. We work from home and have RN on all the time. We appreciate the variety and the universality of RN programs. Most of the day there is something interesting, informative, entertaining - often all three - available to us while we fix computers, do household chores, cook, eat, have a shower, dig holes in the garden and (if we wore ipods) walk the dogs. It's also there in the car. We are sprinkled with information all day, without having to make choices and push buttons. We get to know about odd things and other people. For example, I don't have any interest in sport but I find the Sports Factor a good earful and my husband might not choose to listen to the Media Report but finds it very interesting when it's on. It's not the same to have - as you suggest - a Religion website or a Sports website. It doesn't have the same purpose or effect. We like the specialisations coming to us via RN, and broadening our minds willy nilly! If we have to go and look for these topics, will we go? Your push (not that you're the only organisation trying to do this) to get us all hitched up to the internet for everything just doesn't consider our way of listening. If people have to stop everything else and sit down at a computer to get a program - they just won't be able to form part of the RN audience. It's great that we can listen online and or download programs and the ABC has to be congratulated that they were leading edgers in providing this capacity. But we still want and need the excellent programs on air without being attached bodily to some kind of technology.

Another issue is demographics. How do you know the age of the RN audience? Just one example: I wrote an email of appreciation to an RN program last year. In reply, some ABC exec person commented to the presenter (who then forwarded the email with his thanks to me) something about 'isn't it great to see the younger generation appreciating etc'. I am 65. Still, on the internet (as they say) nobody knows you're a dog!! There seems to be a feeling that many listeners are elderly but if they are, what the hell? Aren't people over 50/60 + entitled to listen to things they like and that suit them? More and more of us will be over 50 so may as well get used to it! RN is wonderfully Australian and a huge amount of its content is Australian made. This is perhaps not true of many other media outlets. Street Stories was a great way for us to meet each other, to meet people we might never have known otherwise. The great talent that many RN presenters/journos seem to have is a way of looking at the world: original, analytical, questioning, sometimes quirky. This makes their interviews and observations a lot more interesting and, to me, valuable, than anodyne pap. We feel bad that we haven't written often enough or enthusiastically enough to express our appreciation of all the good things RN has done for us. But please reconsider axing these programs and let our journos and presenters off the leash and take off their muzzles. Hoping we don't have to attend the stoning of St Stephen any time soon.

Yours sincerely

Ariel Marguin Steve Johnson CC; ABC Board, Senator Bob Brown, Malcolm Turnbull MP (Wentworth), Jane

Connors RN, Stephen Conroy Minister for Communications, Sue Howard ABC, and others

To All State Branches of Friends of the ABC,

At the recent NSW FABC State Conference, representatives from the 15 NSW Branches and members of the NSW Executive discussed at some length the attached proposal for the formation of a national body of Friends of the ABC, which was presented to the conference by representatives from the Cowper branch. Cowper is one of our most active branches, based on the Federal seat of Cowper on the mid North Coast, centred on Coffs Harbour.

We are grateful to the Cowper Branch many hours of thought and discussion which have produced this document. The feeling of the Cowper delegates that everything possible must be done to enable Friends of the ABC to speak with strength as a national body was shared by all who attended the conference. There was also discussion of the history of Friends of the ABC which has resulted in seven separate organizations, but agreement that history should not inhibit the possibility of dialogue between the states which may result in a national organization of strength and unanimity.

It is proposed that such a body would support and reinforce any statements by a national spokesperson - the conference endorsed the previously issued document, The Role of the National Spokesperson, sent to all states in May as part of the review process agreed to when the position was re-established in 2007.

NSW is hopeful that the Cowper proposal will result in some useful and productive dialogue between the states, and looks forward to your responses.

Mal Hewitt  
President, NSW Friends of the ABC

## “Women of the Silk Road”

If you would like to purchase a copy of this book, the book is out of print, although all is not lost, you can buy an ‘electronic version’ (e-book) of “Women of the Silk Road” from:

<http://www.gracemeregrange.com.au/>



Helen Proud, author of  
“Women of the Silk Road”

hostile towards Friends of the ABC. It was so disturbing that on the Sunday Mal Hewett asked Mark Scott if there was a directive from management to the this effect. He said that to the best of his knowledge there was no such directive, but he would clarify this point.

NSW was the first State to form a Friends of the ABC organization, and we are still the only State to have Branches. Other states are run from a central body.

Our Guest Speaker for the Saturday night dinner was David Salter. David who has been a writer, journalist and a producer in the television industry for most of his working life, many with ABC. He produced This Day Tonight and Media Watch among many others over a 40 year period. He has also worked in commercial television both here and overseas as well as with the BBC. In his latest book *The Media We Deserve* he is very critical of the ABC and the loss of production facilities and production staff, very little 'in house' production is made any more.



David Salter

Sunday saw us honing our 'well researched' questions for Mark Scott was the 'key note speaker' for the conference. Mark Scott who has been the Managing Director of the ABC for just over 2 years. Previously he was Editorial Director of John Fairfax Publications. Mark gave a very interesting Audio Visual presentation covering the digital age that the ABC has embraced. ABC is leading the way with innovations in digital delivery in this new medium whether it be Digital T.V., Pod Casting, Internet delivery. In fact the ABC is so diverse it is difficult keep up with the many aspects of the ABC transmissions.

Some points that Mark highlighted:-

- 90% of surveyed groups thought that the ABC does a good job
- 60 million programs have been downloaded in 2007
- 2007 was the year of the ABC's largest audience....2008 is trending be the ABC's best year



Your hard working delegation  
L.R. Glenda, Martin, Tony and Jo



- Advertising, "we have no plans to advertise on 10/08/08.
- Funding creates a challenge to us
- ABC employs 1000 journalists with about 70 in regional Australia
- The top 20 programs on the ABC are Australian made

the ABC". Mark Scott

(Continued on page 10)

## **Fran Kelly**

### **Presenter Radio National Breakfast**

Respected radio presenter, current affairs journalist and political correspondent, Fran Kelly hosts ABC Radio National's agenda-setting Breakfast program.

Though Fran has become a feature of the ABC's coverage of local and world affairs on both radio and television, her career may well have taken a very different direction; after studying arts at Adelaide University, majoring in literature and classics, Fran became part of the Adelaide and Melbourne music scenes at the end of the 1970s.

She was the singer for several bands, most notably an all-girl new wave band, Toxic Shoc, and worked as the Activities Director for Adelaide's Flinders University. She moved to Melbourne to take up the post of Entertainment Director for La Trobe University, booking some of the biggest bands of the day including Simple Minds, Hunters and Collectors, Cold Chisel and Icehouse. She regularly packed out the 2,500 capacity venue and was also responsible for one of the first gigs by INXS - at a time when people weren't even sure how to say their name. From 1984, Fran broadened her experience in arts management as the coordinator of the State-wide Women's Arts Festival for Victoria's 150th Anniversary celebrations, managing 26 staff over 18 months and putting on events across the state.

Her change of tack into current affairs journalism had its seeds in her first foray into radio: also in 1984 Fran worked on Melbourne RRR's Backchat program, which featured women's current affairs, issues and talkback. The experience sparked a desire to embark on a new career.

An unlikely application for a senior current affairs position with the ABC turned out to be her lucky break; though she didn't get the job, Fran was eventually called back to fill in for a few weeks. Then in 1988, she was invited to take up a three month position in Sydney with The Drum, the current affairs program of the ABC's youth radio station, triple j. Her talent for current affairs was soon spotted by other departments at the ABC and after 18 months, Fran moved to work on ABC Radio's flagship current affairs programs AM and PM, heard then, as now, across Australia via ABC Local Radio and ABC Radio National.

In 1993 she moved to the heart of Australian politics, working for ten years in various roles within the Canberra press gallery. Initially Fran remained with AM and PM and within a year was their Chief Political Correspondent and Bureau Chief. In 1997 she swapped studios, joining ABC Radio National's Breakfast program as the political correspondent.

Another big twist in Fran's career came in 2001 when she took on her first job on Australian TV. In 2001 she became political editor for ABC TV's 7.30 Report. After two years she took up an overseas posting as the ABC's Europe correspondent based in London. In March 2005, Fran called time on London, returning home to Australia to take up her current position. She revels in Breakfast's wide brief, which has reignited her passion for the arts, sport, issues and travel, and is still in the thick of Australian and world politics. (ABC Radio National Website)



**Fran Kelly, presenter of Radio National Breakfast.  
6.00 to 8.30 am**

*(Continued from page 9)*

- The Watermark....as Mark was walking around Ultimo a technician guy said to him “we have turned up the colors and size on the watermark”.....
- ABC2 is leading the way in driving digital T.V.
- Kids T.V. - Australian Drama. The ABC has had 20years of funding cuts, normal drama costs about three quarters of a million dollars an hour to produce, it cost approximately 2 million Dollars an hour to produce “Curtin”
- Commercial T.V. will not invest in quality drama
- I View - the first Australian broadcaster to introduce this to the Australian viewer, watch when you want to watch - download to a computer then to your T.V.
- Increase in NEWS content - will be delivered differently
- NOW - has been downloaded by over 100,000 people
- A challenge for the ABC is to reach out to a new audience....young people
- JJJ’s Unleashed - 5000 artists have had 3.3 million ‘downloads’ of their music
- Podcasting is a very important development for the ABC....there has been over 20 million downloads of radio programs this year

**“If most politicians say how much they enjoy the ABC and what a good job it does.....why do they not fund it better?????????”**

(Continued from page 1)

tinuing programs which alter (in form, duration or timeslot):

*Airplay (extended duration and different rpt timeslot), Artworks Feature (different rpt timeslot), Australia Talks (3 days), Book Show (new repeat time), Movietime (new first broadcast), Rear Vision (slightly extended with new first broadcast, and new Sunday time), Rhythm Divine (slightly extended and new rpt timeslot 0500 Sunday), Saturday Extra (new rpt timeslot, replacing By Design rpt), Bush Telegraph (new rpt timeslot at 0100), Asia Pacific (new first broadcast at 0030), Verbatim (new timeslot).*

It took some ten hours for ABC management to respond by putting out a Press Release. In Wednesdays Cricky.com.au former ABC religious broadcaster Paul Collins had this to say about this decision: *Words tell you everything. When you hear "interdisciplinary" you know it means "dumbing down" and "consumer focused" always refers to the lowest common denominator. This is precisely the rhetoric used yesterday by ABC Radio National management to describe their intentions for RN programming next year.*

*Several specialist programs are being taken off-air including the Religion Report, the Media Report and Radio Eye. The Reports are flagship programs that deal with issues central to current culture. Apparently they are being replaced by a movie show and something about the future. Specialist broadcasters will spend more time responding to opinionated bloggers rather than making programs. God help us!*

*Let's be clear what ABC Radio management is up to: it is a case of the bland leading the bland. Specialization is out. Nowadays the belief is that any old (or, more likely, young) "interdisciplinary" journalist can deal with any topic. Well, I've been interviewed literally hundreds of times on ABC radio and TV. My experience is that while most journalists make a reasonable go of it, they just don't know the detail and often have to be led to the key questions.* (Reprinted with permission from Crikey)

Read the full article here: <http://www.crikey.com.au/Media-Arts-and-Sports/20081015-What-are-they-doing-to-Radio-National-God-help-us.html>

and the 'spin' from ABC management here: <http://www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/media/s2392190.htm>

And what Steven said on air: <http://www.crikey.com.au/Media/audio/081015-religion-report-2e34149c-0622-4ca1-aabb-4b90ee3f1932.mp3?source=cmail> this has now been censored by management.

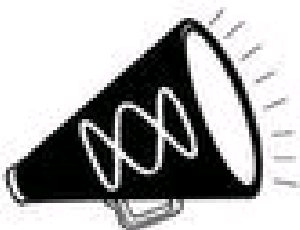
The Crikey article has attracted, at last glance some 50 comments, which shows how incensed R.N. listeners feel about this decision. Both The Sydney Morning Herald, The Australian and other papers have carried stories as well 'Letters to the Editor' have been inundated with correspondence.

We, as friends of the ABC must not sit back and allow this to happen! Do not allow R.N. to become like Local Radio...bland and dumbed down. Your committee is working on further responses as I write this.

Dear Listeners, if any of you care about quality broadcasting, NOW, is the time to write letters. Please keep them polite. Below is the address of the 'movers and shakers' at ABC. Write to either or preferable ALL:

Mr. Mark Scott, Managing Director. Ms. Sue Howard, Manager ABC Radio. The Board .

Network Manager Dr Jane Connors.



**Australian Broadcasting Corporation**

**700 Harris Street**

**Ultimo 2007**



# Letters to the Editor

## Sydney Morning Herald

### Aunty's managers must relearn their ABCs of quality

The ABC, including Radio National, covers religious affairs exceptionally well. I am always tripping over devoted fans of programs such as *The Religion Report* who have no religious belief.

So it was with concern that I read about the possible axing of this program next year ("On-air anger as ABC axes some radio programs", October 16). Analysis of religion is vital because of its influence on personal belief systems. From there to behaviour, in one abrupt step.

If we don't have access to unbiased, specialised, comprehensive coverage of religious affairs, we are not just ignoring one particular elephant in our social lounge room. Given the plurality of belief in Australia, we are dismissing a herd of pachyderms.

The ABC's religious affairs coverage should be defended loudly by anyone who cares about society, psychology, culture, politics, ethics, life views, history, ideology, gender issues, values, oh, and spirituality.

Margaret O'Connor Cook (ACT)

The axing of key Radio National programs represents a further erosion of the importance and relevance of this mighty broadcaster.

We need the independent voice of Radio National; we need its innovative, creative and engaging programs that tell us about ourselves.

If, as the *Herald* reported, the ABC needed an extra \$48.1 million for 2008-09 to sustain its output, it should have it. If the ABC is broke, the Federal Government should fix it.

Sandra Symans Woolahra

Not only is the ABC vacating the field of religion, media and a host of other specialist offerings on Radio National, but it is deserting its audience over 50.

Thanks to Stephen Crittenden's commitment to his cause, the ABC has now revealed that it is vacating the field of informed public discussion to "respond to its hugely successful digital growth". If that explanation is not entirely clear, this ABC statement is: "Radio National programs attract an

audience 50+ years or older, while online audiences for ABC Radio National are under 50."

It's not that everyone over 50 is fascinated by religion. But we are interested in being well informed - about religion, the media, the environment, sport, politics - and there are an awful lot of us. Come on Aunty, you're over 70 yourself. You should be in touch.

Jill Greenwell President, Friends of the ABC (ACT & Region), Aranda

The axing of *The Religion Report* is a management failure. If the suits at the ABC cannot see that *The Religion Report* has been the best single-subject program on the radio for the past decade, then they are useless at their jobs.

Stephen Crittenden is easy to listen to, well informed and not afraid of an argument. In their "race to the bottom" of commercial success, the Scotts and Milans of this world flee to the blandness of pop and inoffensive

commentary in their search for a youth demographic.

I think that's short-changing young people, who can have a good time but still want to hear the airing of religious and moral controversies.

Geoff Mullen McMahons Point

Sometimes brilliant people need to be given space and freedom. *In Conversation* provides just that. Week after week Robin Williams expertly interviews some of the world's leading scientists, affording them the space to discuss those subjects most important to them. The BBC, in its overproduced, structured manner, has nothing that comes near Radio National and its reporting of scientific thought. *In Conversation* is unique in its free-flowing style, allowing science to be articulated clearly and carefully. Regardless of shifts in audience demographic or digital delivery, listeners need content, which *In Conversation* delivers at the highest level.

Michael Hooper London

Public inquiry on right track

### Ungodly change is no solution to Aunty's salvation

By writing opponents off as people who don't like change, Kirsten Garrett (Letters, October 22) does Radio National listeners a great disservice. She appears to forget that the ABC is a national broadcaster funded by the public for (supposedly) the public good. On what basis does management suddenly believe that axing all the 8.30am programs is necessary?

Contrast the ABC's attitude to that of the American Public Broadcasting Service and its flagship program, *Jim Lehrer News Hour*. It has been running for decades, with very few changes.

I have listened to *The Religion Report* for years. Stephen Crittenden does not strike me as the histrionic type. He is one of the best journalists on deck. He

had the courage and passion to speak out for the public good. If only ABC management had as much regard for ABC tradition and listeners.

David Jordan Dee Why

Kirsten Garrett doesn't get it. We, the eight-cents-a-day audience, trust that Stephen Crittenden still has "a good future with the network". It may be that "the changes have taken a year of careful working through" but this is the first that we've heard of them and we don't want them.

Jan McCarthy Blackheath

In a miraculous piece of circular argument, Kirsten Garrett preaches the doctrine that the media should

make greater efforts to "get the full story". Surely this is exactly what the soon-to-be-axed *Religion Report* aims to do and does well.

Megan Brock Summer Hill

Kirsten Garrett thinks journalists who have aired criticisms of the program changes at Radio National should "take a cold shower". This will involve a lot of showers. It is not just journalists who are expressing concerns about our ABC. Being "a senior employee at the ABC for over 30 years" does not alter the fact that it is still our ABC.

Reg Wilding Wollongong

As a former senior ABC employee, I agree strongly with Kirsten Garrett

that Radio National cannot remain static, and it is vital that its "core of specialisation is not threatened".

However, not all critics of the decision to drop three of its best specialist programs are "staff and listeners who don't like change".

Some changes can be improvements, some are not. *The Religion Report*, *The Media Report* and *The Sports Factor* are exactly what the network should be featuring on air and online.

The presenters are experienced and dedicated broadcast journalists who keep coming up with interesting and different perspectives. It's a welcome change to much of what's available across Australian broadcasting.

Ian Wolfe Bowral