

Dr Peter Pockley
Science Writer & Broadcaster

25 Avenue Road
Glebe
NSW 2037
Telephone: +61 (0) 2 9660 6363
Fax: +61 (0) 2 9660 6239
Email: scicomm@bigpond.net.au

A second Open Letter to:

Mr Mark Scott
Managing Director
ABC

18 January 2009

By fax: (02) 8333 5482 (one page), email: Scott.Mark@abc.net.au and post: GPO Box 9994,
Sydney, NSW 2001

Dear Mr Scott,

REVERSING MAJOR CHANGES TO ABC RADIO NATIONAL

The letter to the editor of yesterday's *Weekend Australian* by Dr John Carmody prompts me to write and repeat my encouragement of ABC leadership to engage seriously and publicly in the debate about quality, content and specialised broadcasters on Radio National and ABC TV. I am disappointed that, as Editor-in-Chief of ABC programs, you have not replied *yourself* to my first Open Letter of 7 December 2008 (summarised in my letter to the *Australian Financial Review*, 16 December).

Instead, I received a letter from Ms Sue Howard, Director of Radio, dated 19 December 2008 (but postmarked 30 December) in one of her last jobs before she was seen off the ABC on the date of her letter. It would thus be futile to reply to Ms Howard even though she was penultimately responsible for the changes to Radio National's line-up for 2009 which drew such a massive reaction from audiences, commentators and politicians. In my letter to you I referred to the wide range of criticisms on major issues raised by ABC management's decisions and the manner of their implementation that have appeared in mainstream media and which, at the time, had received precisely no answers.

Ms Howard's letter continues that vacuum of public engagement and, in her unconvincing defence of the changes, offers not a scrap of evidence or external support for making the cuts. The responsibility for responding fully and publicly to the criticisms now bounces back to you. Please refer to my letter to the editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald* nearly three months ago (23 October) and all of the other published reports, commentaries and editorials which I cited in my Open Letter – and more.

My headline to this and the first Open Letter remains imperative. This coming week sees the last of the summer repeats of three 8.30 am programs which are being axed. Radio is a fast and flexible medium and, with Ms Howard gone, it is entirely within your capabilities to reverse the cuts, a move which would win wide plaudits for responsiveness to the ABC's erstwhile supportive communities.

Finally and most important for the ABC's credibility in this and related matters (as urged in my *SMH* Letter), it is incumbent on you to release publicly the report of the "investigation" into Mr Stephen Crittenden and his role in the Radio National controversy which Ms Howard passes off as "confidential". If kept under wraps, this over-long exercise will be branded as a managerial cover-up.

Yours sincerely,

(Founding Head of ABC Science Unit)