



# ON AIR

*Newsletter of Friends of the ABC (ACT & Region) Inc*

## INSIDE:

President's Report cont.	-2-
Australia's Free Trade NOT Yet Agreed	-2-
Committee Members	-2-
Annual General Meeting -2004	-3-
Wombats, Weeds & Widdleberries	-3-
Application for Membership or Renewal	-4-

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Membership renewals are now due. If you haven't renewed this year, please complete the form on Page 4 or pass the form on to other interested friends or family.

## NEW COMMITTEE

A new committee was elected at the AGM - see page 2 for details. A special thanks to Sandor Siro, David Shaw and Bridget Shaw for their participation on the committee last year.

## MANNING CLARKE DINNER

### **Manning Clarke Winter 2004 Dinners**

A series of dinners titled 'Continuing the great conversations' will be held at Manning Clarke House, 11 Tasmania Circle, Forrest, on Tuesday at 7pm.

Guest cooks will prepare very special meals and invited wine-makers would introduce their wines to the group attending.

Speakers addressing the dinners are author, Helen Garner on July 6; Dawn Casey on July 20; Bishop Pat Power on August 31 and journalist and author Christina Wallace on September 14.

Reservations may be made by phoning 6295 9433. The cost per dinner is \$60 for members of Manning Clarke House and \$80 for others.

## PRESIDENTS REPORT

by Margaret O'Connor

This will be my last Report after three years as President of the ACT and Region branch of the Friends - I announced at the Annual General Meeting on 5 June that I would not be seeking re-election in that office although I would be continuing as a committee member. This follows my appointment commencing on 1 January 2004 as Friends of the ABC Spokesperson and the realisation that occupying both positions will be too big a job for me.

I would like to reiterate comments I made at the AGM, firstly, that being President of a local branch of Friends has been a wonderful experience and that this is a hugely worthwhile cause, and secondly that I am very grateful to all committee members over the last three years with whom I have the continuing pleasure of working.

Highlights over the past three years have included:

- applauding the brilliant ABC coverage of the September 11 terrorist attacks and the January 2003 bushfire emergency,
- witnessing the public support for the ABC during the tumultuous final months of the Shier tenure and in response to complaints of anti-Americanism by ex-Minister Alston,
- watching the ABC withstand politically and ideologically motivated attacks from serial ABC haters (as evidenced by the results of Newspolls, ANAO reports and improved ratings),
- getting to know and work with Presidents of other state branches,
- seeing the Friends of the ABC grow and develop nationally,
- organising public functions such as the September 2002 dinner (Guest Speakers Jim Middleton and Liz McGrath) and the February 2003 function at Tilleys (Guest Speakers Alex Sloane and Kerry O'Brien).

*cont..... page 2*

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT CONT..

- tramping for kilometres around the corridors of Parliament House during lobbying stints.
- There has been a down side during the last three years, but it has certainly not originated from my committee, the general Friends membership (including Friends from other state branches), the wonderful ABC staff or occasional politicians who have surprised and gratified us with their support. The tragedy is that the ABC is still terribly underfunded despite all our efforts and the political and ideological attacks continue unabated. The Australian situation is but one piece in an international picture where media moguls run

deliberate campaigns to discredit public broadcasting in other countries such as the USA and the UK, and where there seems to be little political commitment anywhere on the globe for such a huge instrument for public good. It is apparent that only people power will save public broadcasting in this country. Australians certainly support the ABC. Let's hope that as a nation we have the energy, determination and far-sightedness to force this issue to become more of a political imperative. ■

Margaret O'Connor  
President

## Australia's Free Trade NOT Yet Agreed

The Free Trade Agreement between Australia and the United States has not come into effect, even though John Howard and George Bush have signed the document worked out earlier this year.

The legislation necessary to implement the Agreement will probably be introduced into Parliament in August. Meanwhile, the two Parliamentary Committees holding inquiries into the USFTA are continuing their investigations. One of them, the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, will report on 23 June, and the other, the Select Senate Committee on the US/Australia Free Trade Agreement, will report in early August.

You can read the FABC submissions made on your behalf by going to

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jstct/usafta/>

where ours is Submission 60, and to

[http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/freetrade\\_ctte/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/freetrade_ctte/index.htm)

where ours is Submission 376.

NOW is the time to write to or visit our local Federal representatives, especially ALP Senators and Federal members!

The ALP has stated it will not vote for this legislation unless the USFTA is in the national interest. We need to ensure that the ALP understands the importance of voting against this legislation. We must not trade off our national and cultural identity.

Global Trade Watch has neatly summarised the FTA's impact on Australian culture:

→ Bad for Australian Culture and Creative Industries - Under the FTA, the government has surrendered the right to ensure Australian content in all new media. Future Australian governments will never be able to increase the amount of Australian content on existing media. As well, the government has agreed to changes in Australia's intellectual property laws which will stifle creativity in areas from software development to music. More, on this and other aspects of the Free Trade Agreement on <http://www.nofta.org/impacts/culture.html>. ■

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

A new committee was elected at the Annual General Meeting. They met on 17 June to elect office bearers. The committee for the next year is:

### Jill Greenwell - President

☎ 6253 3531  
[jgreenwell@ozemail.com.au](mailto:jgreenwell@ozemail.com.au)

### Margaret O'Connor - Vice President

☎ 6251 1880 (h)  
[margoforte@hotmail.com](mailto:margoforte@hotmail.com)

### Barbara Godfrey - Secretary

☎ 6291 3680  
[bgodfrey@netspeed.com.au](mailto:bgodfrey@netspeed.com.au)

### Janny Corry - Treasurer & Membership Secretary

☎ 6236 9294 (h)  
[barada@ozemail.com.au](mailto:barada@ozemail.com.au)

### John Ley - Public Officer

☎ 6254 6018  
[john\\_ley@apex.net.au](mailto:john_ley@apex.net.au)

### John Keen - Newsletter Coordination

☎ 6254 2118  
[keenbavay@aol.com](mailto:keenbavay@aol.com)

### Helen Wiles - ABC International Watch

☎ 6295 6066  
[helenbwiles@smartchat.com.au](mailto:helenbwiles@smartchat.com.au)

### Howard Silcock - Webmaster

☎ 6260 8415  
[howard.silcock@inet.net.au](mailto:howard.silcock@inet.net.au)

### Sandy Forbes

☎ 6295 8578  
[redoak@netspeed.com.au](mailto:redoak@netspeed.com.au)

### Ann Hosking

☎ 6247 3506  
[anngео@ozemail.com.au](mailto:anngео@ozemail.com.au)

### Bob Hodge

☎ 6161 1918  
[robertlhodge@webone.com.au](mailto:robertlhodge@webone.com.au)

VISIT THE FABC WEBSITE FOR ALL UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION  
[www.friendsoftheabc.org](http://www.friendsoftheabc.org)

# Annual General Meeting - 2004

Just a quick report on our very successful AGM on 5 June. There was a good turn-out of about 60, despite the difficulties in parking around the Griffin Centre at the moment. Perhaps an afternoon meeting is the way to go in future.

On the subject of the timing of meetings, in future our AGM will be held between July and the end of November. A constitutional amendment passed at the AGM enables this change - and also means that for this one year, renewals and new memberships will run for an extra 3 months, that is, until June 30, 2005.

Margaret O'Connor reported on the Committee's main activities over the last year. Adequate funding and a de-

politicised ABC Board appointments policy are among the most important things for Friends of the ABC to be pushing for. Margaret initiated discussion on our forthcoming programme in which pre-Federal election planning will be important.

The meeting expressed its appreciation of Margaret's enormous effort as President over the last three years. She is retiring from that position to concentrate on her role as Spokesperson for Friends of the ABC.

The new committee will be meeting shortly and we'll let you know next newsletter who the office-bearers for 2004/05 will be. Jackie French's entertaining address is reported on below. ■

## “WOMBATS, WEEDS AND WIDDLEBERRIES”

### Jackie French, guest speaker at the AGM, confesses all.

Jackie's "true confessions of 15 years of TV, books and radio" began with a translation for the uninitiated of Wombat, a language which Jackie has mastered in her years of living in the Braidwood area. Her hilarious account of encounters with wombats and other wild life revealed what sensitive and intelligent creatures we have in the bush, and it also revealed some remarkable things about Jackie: her mastery of reading and writing her own language despite being dyslexic and labelled a 'non-reader' as a little girl.

A passionate supporter of the ABC, especially in its role as a regional and rural broadcaster, Jackie was most interesting in her reflections upon the differences between the ABC and commercial TV and radio. In her 15 years of presenting programmes for both the ABC and for commercial networks she had personal experience of these differences and of the changes within the ABC. She listed:

- ▶▶ ABC funding being reduced to a trickle, not particularly evident in furnishings and physical surrounds, but very evident in programmes,
- ▶▶ In particular, research reduced to a minimum; where once there was the time for careful research and tailor-made programming, now shortage of funds forces the purchase of more ready-made products,
- ▶▶ The obsession with ratings as being a distinguishing feature of commercial networks,
- ▶▶ In the ABC, when staff do show an interest in ratings, it is not the ratings of the programme, the presenter, or even the local network which are the focus, but 'us', the ABC itself - and an extraordinary pride in the integrity of the material produced,

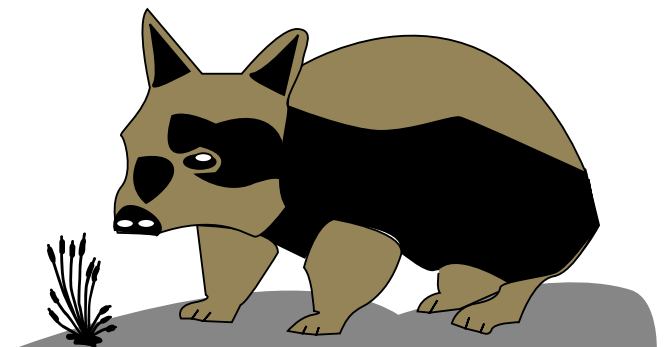
- ▶▶ The 'ABC culture' may be laughed at, but it's real,
- ▶▶ Bias as something which is allowed, even encouraged in commercial networks where there is far greater scope for the expression of purely personal views; ABC staff by contrast put enormous effort into presenting both sides of an issue,
- ▶▶ Regional radio is the ABC - it responds to particular interests and needs of regional communities and it actually builds community spirit,
- ▶▶ Intelligence is not restricted to a chardonnay-sipping elite, but is found in tractor-driving farmers listening to the radio as they work.

The ABC's emphasis on quality programmes shows respect for the discernment of many different types of Australians

Then on to weeds - not unwanted plants, but very necessary in all sorts of ways, especially in times of drought.

And widdleberries? Well time was getting on, and that may have to be another story - or just a laugh!

President Margaret O'Connor thanked Jackie for entertaining and interesting us with her humour and her reflections, and her thanks were supported by all in attendance. ■





Friends of the ABC (ACT & Region) Inc  
GPO Box 2625  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OR RENEWAL**

**Please complete this form and return to the above address.**

I wish to become a member  or I wish to renew my membership

Enclosed is  \$ 25.00 or  \$15.00 Concession

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (H) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have e-mail would you like to receive our quarterly newsletter via e-mail or would you prefer the newsletter posted to you? E-mail  Posted

**I can assist with the following activities:**

- Help with the newsletter
- Help photocopy and collate
- Help with fundraising
- Rallies
- Letterbox drops
- Work on a stall
- Wordprocessing / database
- Committee member
- Telephone tree

Can you offer any special skills eg useful contacts, writing experience etc?

\_\_\_\_\_

(Office Use Only)	Member No.....	Valid to .....
-------------------	----------------	----------------

***The Friends of the ABC is a national community organisation that supports the ABC as an independent, comprehensive and innovative public broadcaster.***

Further information: 6236 9294 or visit the Friends website at [www.friendsoftheabc.org](http://www.friendsoftheabc.org)