

1. I must express my sincere thanks to Barry and Bev for allowing me time to express my 'unfinished business' from 2014. My unavoidable stay in hospital last November prevented me from giving my Annual Report at the AGM.

Bev and Barry have been extremely generous to me, giving me every courtesy in the last three months and I want to publicly express my thanks to both of them. I have appreciated it. I wish Barry a great term as President for however long he wishes to stay there. My best wishes to both of you because you stand as one. I am sure you will be terrific at the helm of Blue Mountains ABC Friends.

2. I have to say I was very proud to be the President of this Branch of ABC Friends. Very Proud. This is an extraordinary branch and you all deserve a thank you. When I think over all that we achieved I can't help but feel proud. I would like to recall some of the 2014 highlights.
3. We commenced on Saturday February 15th 2014, here at the Grand View. I remember my excitement at the crowd of people waiting to attend that meeting. I was truly overwhelmed.

A black cloud had been placed over "our ABC" by the election of the Abbott Government in the previous September. Having promised NO CUTS to ABC funding BEFORE the election, notice of huge funding cuts to our National Broadcaster had already taken place. All of you who became active in ABC Friends were extremely welcome, it was apparent that the Friends would have to become more aggressive in activities to make the public aware of the fight to save the ABC.

4. As a group we became much better organised and some great achievements resulted. Firstly a website. Our branch had started a website under the previous president, but technology was moving ahead and spontaneously Tony Young offered to expand our website and to keep it up to-date. The new website was launched a month later in front of our state president Mal Hewitt. This website is being used more and more and I get a feeling of pride every time I click on it. Our thanks to Tony – you are a gentle genius. The website is a lot of work. Please help Tony by giving news, jokes, pictures – to put on to the website – the more interesting the site, the more "hits" it receives – again informing the public of the sad sad news (and some good) about the ABC.

For nearly 5 months I was doing both the President and Secretary's work. A big thank you to Bonnie Tucker who put 3 months of Minutes onto the computer until permanent secretaries were appointed. Libby Blackburn, and Haidee Roper bless their hearts volunteered to be Minute Secretary and Business Secretary.

5. A "Snippets" page full of ABC Friends Blue Mountains news was also sent to all local community groups for their noticeboards. Libby Blackburn had this gem of an idea.

A letter group initially one or two people started to write to newspapers, MPs and the Minister for Communications. Thank you Susan Lamont, your valuable contributions have been appreciated. Bob Macadam is also a dab hand in effective writing as well.

6. From early March “Protest Marches and Rallies” were being held to gain more support to retain a viable ABC. Members from our Branch attended in the City, Windsor, Belmore Park, Canberra, Katoomba and Ultimo. The rally outside the ABC offices in Ultimo also attracted a number of medias service who photographed some of our group. The the SMH did a double page spread on the rally as speakers included Quentin Dempster and Johnathan Homes. Photographs also appeared in overseas media. Thank you to those who attended and made banners etc.

As a group we walked in the Procession at Springwood Foundation Day where we learnt several ways to improve our Presentation. By June, for the Winter Magic Festival in Katoomba, we had a much larger and more visibly organised group. It was a very successful day.

7. Early July our Branch was invited to organise the State Bi-Annual Conference for ABC Friends. I accepted on behalf of you all. The Conference was in August, so I needed to move fast. I conned Libby and Tony into assisting. The job of Assistant and Secretary, automatically went to Tony and Libby. We systematically set about finding a suitable venue and organizing the Conference. Which we did.

Tony with all his electronic knowledge, sorted out all the visuals, music, and microphones. Ron Fuller, a brand-new member at the time, recorded and televised the whole conference. I have to say we received good feedback regarding the conference. We certainly set the bar higher, much higher than previously. Libby and Tony were wonderful in their generosity of time and knowledge – I loved doing the whole thing.

8. A tribute must be paid to Julia McGill, a member of this branch for many years, who sadly died Thursday, April 10 after a long and very difficult illness. Julia held many executive positions in our branch and was a passionate supporter of the ABC.
9. During the year, a large number of ABC friends attended an organised tour of the ABC studios at Ultimo on Friday 18th of July. The Book Club with Jennifer Byrnes recorded 2 or 3 TV programs which we saw during the afternoon. It was enjoyed by everyone.

10. Watching the demise of so much of the ABC happening before our eyes during the year was devastating. However it must have been heartbreaking for the staff at the ABC. Too many great broadcasters were made redundant and the process for this was quite brutal – most had to prove themselves amongst their peer group, the staff called them the process The Hunger Games.

Quentin Dempster was told of his sacking by a department head.

At the State Conference, the Managing Director, Mark Scott reassured those attending of the stability and future of the ABC and that future planning was well in hand. He also said that the future ABC held little for "older Australians" as the focus was to attract the new younger audience. He waved his hand around the audience and more or less discounted the mature age group attending on the spot.

It was at the conference that the name Friends of the ABC was voted out and the new name ABC Friends was adopted. The new title fits with the computer age and has a modern sound. I am now quite used to the change and like it.

11. Once again between 8 and 12 members attended the annual ABC Friends dinner at Cellos Restaurant in Sydney where Margaret Throsby was the guest speaker. The group also attended the awards night/party at Ultimo where greatly loved and admired broadcasters Jim Middleton, and Sean Dorney, (who unfortunately was not able to attend were honoured.
12. Now to the AGM. After months of fruitless invitations to many well-known ABC identities, I finally, with the help of Ron Fuller, secured Russell Stapleton a producer from RN to speak. It was decided that a two way conversation between Russell and Ron Fuller(from the ABC) would work very well. Unfortunately I was unable to attend and a re-organisation was hastily applied.

My sincere thanks to the indomitable Libby Blackburn who summonsed the lovely Alison Burnard to assist and they organised a great day. I'm sure Tony was called on and all the remainder of the committee who had volunteered to fill the many important roles needed to run a successful function. Thank you all for stepping up to help make a very successful AGM. I've had so many favourable comments regarding the success of the AGM.

Libby, I'm sorry I put you through so much extra stress – but thank you.

To my loyal Deputy President, Alison – thank you. You were always there for me – a cup of tea or coffee in my hand when I desperately needed it and a glass of something stronger when that was required. Your loyalty and so much more, thank you.

Robert Macadam – Bob, You always give me the right advice when I need it – as well as doing the most important job of keeping the finances strictly in order.

Haidee, your cheerfull and quietly efficient work with the important role of Minute taking and typing the Minutes is appreciated so much. Thank you.

Garth – well I guess I can call you cheerful too – but you did a terrific job with the Newsletter. So many people have said how much the Newsletter means to them – it keeps them up-to-date with all ABC and our branch news in a concise way. Thank you.

Janelle – how many times have I thanked you for your meticulous work – always efficiently done and always on time. You are synonymous with Membership Secretary and you do a wonderful job. Thank you.

Helen, Eunice, always there, always ready to do anything to help. Your organisation was much appreciated Helen – thank you. Richard for believing so faithfully in the ABC.

Jan – our photographer – where would a group like this be without a photographer? Thank you Jan. You're a real professional. Thank you to Bonnie who gave us our first photos. To Tony, electronics, photographer, webmaster par excellence, fixer of everything. Your quiet loyalty reassured me many times – you seem to receive pleasure in my absolute delight at your inventions – you were and are THE BEST – thanks seems inadequate.

Have I missed anyone? I hope not – but an extra thank you, just in case. However the real star is Libby! Libby always there, always ready, always 100% sincere. Libby, my friend always. Typing skills perfection. I have loved working with you Libby. You were a great support for me and I relied on your computer skills 100%. Thank you for everything.

As many of you know, I was very sad to give up the Presidency, unfortunately my health determined my decision. I truly loved the job as my passion for an independent, free and unbiased public broadcaster is as intense as ever. In both good times and in emergencies the professionalism of the ABC can always be relied on.

I am so happy to be able to leave the branch in good order and have such a sincere and capable person to lead you into the future.

Barry, together with Bev, will be more than able to fight for a viable ABC. Perhaps the time frame for dismantling the ABC may have been slowed by the recent poor polling for the government. That would be a help. But we must remove the threat to abolish the public broadcaster altogether.

Good luck Barry. I look forward to supporting you. We all need to work to contain or dismiss any threats to diminish our ABC. "Aunty" is part of Australia's social fabric and it must remain that way.