

### Positions vacant

This space is usually reserved for our President's message. Unfortunately, our newly elected president, Lachlan Garland, has resigned due to increasing demands from other pre standing commitments. We wish Lachlan well in his endeavours.

Our branch is now without both a secretary and president and whilst ABC Friends Blue Mountains will continue running, we will be operating in a modified way until these crucial positions are filled.

If you feel you have something to contribute to the branch, now would be a good time to put your hand up – not necessarily as branch president or secretary – there are many other ways you could help out. Please give this some thought before our next general meeting on Saturday March 18.

### Turnbull government ignores advice, appoints Minerals Council boss Vanessa Guthrie to ABC board

The Turnbull government has overruled an independent selection panel to appoint the chair of the Minerals Council to the ABC board.



Communications Minister Mitch Fifield said Vanessa Guthrie has the "requisite skills" to be on the board, despite not making the final list of recommendations put forward by the Nomination Panel for ABC and SBS Board Appointments. The five-year appointment comes amid heated political debate about the role of fossil fuels and renewable energy in Australia, and follows government criticism of the public broadcaster's coverage of coal mining and energy security.

The government will soon consider a separate nomination panel report on the position of the ABC chairperson.

The government also announced academic Sally Walker and

former Medibank Private boss George Savvides will join the SBS board.

Published: February 27, 2017. More on this story by Adam Gartrell, Political correspondent, at: <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/turnbull-government-ignores-advice-appoints-minerals-council-boss-vanessa-guthrie-to-abc-board-20170227-gum4hc.html>

### ABC Friends Blue Mountains Branch members attend ABC protest rally



A healthy representation of members from our local branch attended last Thursday's protest of around 70 people outside the Ultimo office of the ABC to protest about recent cuts including music and shortwave radio.

ABC Friends NSW and ACT President, Mal Hewitt addressed the rally to talk about several issues including the impact of cutting ABC Shortwave radio. You can watch the video here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bPkq\\_GcaWk&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bPkq_GcaWk&feature=youtu.be)

Read Mal's article on shortwave radio on next page

View other photos of the rally here: [www.fabcnswbm.org.au/gallery/](http://www.fabcnswbm.org.au/gallery/)

## The impact of ending the ABC shortwave radio service by Mal Hewitt

Here is a list, by no means exclusive, of people spread across the northern half of Australia who depend on shortwave and for whom there is really no workable alternative:

Tour operators and passengers, Aboriginal sea rangers (from Cape York to the Kimberley): Fishermen, both commercial and indigenous: Stock camps, generally moving from place to place: Cattle stations, many with very poor internet service: Truckies, especially road train drivers on the run from Adelaide to Darwin, and all across the Top End: Grey nomads through Qld., NT and WA: Road construction workers: Miners and prospectors: Workers on oil rigs off the NW Coast: Tradesmen on the road, usually between remote communities: Thousands of aboriginal families in 150 remote communities numbering from 20 to 200 people, who get their beloved AFL footy and Country Music on shortwave, and their emergency information:

Countless thousands in villages across PNG, Solomons, Vanuatu, Fiji Islands, for whom Radio Australia on shortwave is their link with the world, and their source of cyclone warnings and weather information.

All of these people can receive a strong shortwave signal on a radio which fits in the hand, costing between \$80 and \$140. ABC Management claimed that shortwave had a range of 200k - one of their many lies! Shortwave is a reliable signal in all weathers, with a range of up to 2,000 km. Management claim that shortwave is "old technology" That may be, but it still works better than anything else.

ABC Management directs people to their existing AM and FM transmitters in Alice, Katherine and Darwin - AM range from the transmitter is about 80k, FM about 20k. Around 90% of the land mass of Northern Australia is not covered by an AM or FM signal. Management directed people to the Royal Flying Doctor radio service for weather and emergency information - that service was turned off 10 years ago. ABC Management promotes its alternatives - the VAST (Viewer Access Satellite TV) and Sky Muster satellite systems, for which you need a satellite dish, a computer and sound equipment, at a cost of up to \$4,000!

Just ideal for most of the people on my list above!

The decision was made in the comfort of Ultimo offices, without any consultation - nobody from management or the board went to NT to talk to users. ABC staff in Alice and Darwin were not consulted.

Since the announcement on 6th December, ABC management and Michelle Guthrie (3 letters from me) were advised of the adverse impact, of the misinformation coming from the ABC, and requested to defer the closure, but these requests were ignored, and not even responded to.

All for a saving of \$1.9m in the ABC's annual budget. Less than the cost of two 50 minute drama shows on TV. Also a strange interpretation of the ABC's Charter, requiring the ABC to provide a service to ALL Australians.

If you can, please pass this information on to your members. NT Labor Senators, especially Malarndirri McCarthy have been vocal and active, as has Nick Xenophon, whose Bill requesting that the Federal Government guarantee the funding of shortwave is about to be launched in the Senate.

More in the next Update magazine.

*Mal Hewitt, President ABC Friends Blue Mountains*

## The Future of Public Broadcasting series

The Conversation, back in 2014 and 2015 published a number of articles looking at the role of taxpayer-funded broadcasters, how they shape our media and whether they provide value for money. Well worth reading to put what is happening today with ABC and SBS into perspective.

**Series link** <https://theconversation.com/au/topics/the-future-of-public-broadcasting-10081>

Links to some of the articles:

**Does the ABC deliver Australians good bang for their buck?** <https://theconversation.com/does-the-abc-deliver-australians-good-bang-for-their-buck-25608>

**You'll miss it when it's gone: why public broadcasting is worth saving** <https://theconversation.com/youll-miss-it-when-its-gone-why-public-broadcasting-is-worth-saving-45300>

