

Our Next Meeting 10.00am Saturday May 20, Grand View Hotel, Wentworth Falls

An Evening with Michelle Guthrie

A chance to hear from the ABC managing director and to ask her questions

The HUB, Springwood

6pm Monday June 6

All welcome Free admission



This event is a unique opportunity for Blue Mountains residents to meet Michelle Guthrie and be involved in a discussion with the person who has the responsibility for reshaping the ABC. This newsletter contains excerpts from articles published during the year since Ms Guthrie has been Managing Director.

If you have internet access, all the links to the full stories can be found at fabcnswbm.org.au/n15

Missing in action: the ABC and Australia's screen culture

Kim Dalton, The conversation, May 1 2017

Achievements by the ABC to significantly increase levels of local drama, comedy, documentary, Indigenous and children's content, as well as expand partnerships with independent production houses and creative talent, have in recent years been reversed.

The problem lies with a lack of governance, an inadequate, outdated Charter and the ABC's poor relationship with the independent production sector.

Between 2006 and 2009, the Howard and Rudd governments increased ABC TV's budget by almost 30%. The new funding was for additional Australian content.

It was provided by government in support of a clearly articulated policy-based proposal and strategy. The ABC would increase levels of Australian drama, documentary, children's and Indigenous content. It would work productively and in partnership with the independent production sector. Finally, it would engage strategically with federal and state funding agencies to finance its expanded slate of Australian content, including outside Sydney and Melbourne.

The extra funding was provided in the context of Australia's national screen policy framework. It resulted in a significant increase in the volume, diversity and quality of new Australian programs delivered to ABC TV audiences.

By 2012–13, the ABC was commissioning and broadcasting around 15 hours of high budget history documentaries each year. It also launched a dedicated children's channel and increased the breadth, depth and Australianness of its children's programming. Audiences responded positively.

But in the past few years, it has become clear that this was a passing moment in the history of the ABC.

Full story here: fabcnswbm.org.au/n15

Cutting on the bias

Jane Goodall, *Inside Story*, December 5 2016

Is Michelle Guthrie copping the blame for two decades of attacks on the ABC?

ABC managing director Michelle Guthrie has had a bad time in the headlines over the past couple of weeks. After responding to Noel Pearson's allegations that the ABC is "a miserable racist broadcaster" she has faced a barrage of criticism for recent cuts to Radio National programming and the loss of Catalyst from ABC television, along with its team of seventeen specialised science broadcasters. Various accused of being "out of her depth" and "morally and spiritually bankrupt," of "gutting a cultural treasure trove" and "remaking the ABC in Murdoch's image," is she taking more heat than she deserves?

Or is it that, after nearly two decades of being under intermittent and at times savage attack, ABC staff and their supporters have, in the words of a certain over-quoted senator, had it up to here with their tolerance? Could it be that the current sense of crisis is overblown? What should we make of a Twitter flurry complaining of inadequate attention to the Brandis affair on 7.30 and ABC News, or the continued rumblings about Chris Uhlmann's views on renewable energy and the South Australian blackout? As always with complaints of political bias, within or against the ABC, moods and impressions feed into the account. The more you drill down for evidence, the harder it is to nail.

If members of the Coalition government are convinced that the ABC's default setting is on the left of the dial, there is a growing chorus of opinion that the dial has been switched firmly to the right, and that Guthrie's recent suite of cuts and changes are a clear sign of it.

Full story here: fabcnswbm.org.au/nl5

Is Michelle Guthrie Tuned in to the ABC?

Margaret Simons, *The Monthly*

The new managing director's vision isn't clear

In the early weeks of her tenure as managing director of the ABC, Michelle Guthrie took her executive team "off site", away from the public broadcasting palace in Sydney's Ultimo, to think big about the future of Australia's most important cultural institution.

She asked her team to put aside strategic planning documentation and instead consider what the media landscape might look like in five or ten years, and what the role of the ABC might be.

The trends were identified. A dramatic reduction in "appointment television" and an increase in content on-demand. A complete lack of concern among young people about where content originated or how it was delivered, so long as they could access it when they wanted and on whatever device they wished. Young people no longer went to a media outlet. Instead, that outlet's content came to them, through their social media feeds. In the future, that could include streaming to driverless cars or wearable devices or even, perhaps, devices implanted in the body. *continued next page*



Winter Magic Parade

Our Branch will be involved in Winter Magic again this year by marching in the parade and holding a stall. This draws the public's attention to the ABC and provides an opportunity to inform people that ABC management is changing the structure rapidly and things are not always what they seem behind the scenes.

And what, Guthrie asked, defined the ABC? What was it all about? The conventional answer came back: “The ABC is the home of Australian conversations and stories.”

Guthrie then asked another question: “Are we the home of Australian stories or the source of Australian stories?”

It was a significant question, and one that could define her term in one of the most important jobs in the country.

Guthrie took up the job in May this year. It is early days, and far too soon to judge whether she will be good or bad for the national broadcaster. Everyone likes her. She is, it is unanimously agreed, smart, personable and even charismatic. But she has some people worried.

Full story here: fabcnswbm.org.au/n15

ABC managing director Michelle Guthrie on her plan to transform the national broadcaster

Ann Hyland, *The Financial Review*, November 30 2016

When Michelle Guthrie became the first female and Australian-Chinese managing director of the ABC, she quit a substantially better paying role at Google, one of the world’s biggest and most ambitious companies, to do so. Why?

Michelle Guthrie’s CV

1994-1998

Legal/business development director,
BSkyD, London

1998-2000

Legal/business development director,
Foxtel, Sydney

2000-2003

Business development executive
vice-president,
Star TV, Hong Kong

2003-2007

CEO,
Star TV, Hong Kong

2007-2010

MD,
Providence Equity Partners, Hong Kong

2011-2014

MD,
partner business solutions,
APAC, Google, Singapore

2014-2016

MD, Agencies, APAC, Google, Singapore

May 2016

MD, ABC, Sydney

“You sound like my mother,” says Guthrie reproachfully, and then laughs.

“It wasn’t a job I ever thought I’d be able to get. I thought when I moved back to Australia, that would be when I left Google in a few years’ time, and I’d be building up a portfolio of non-executive director roles.”

Guthrie, a lawyer by training, worked for almost two decades in the media sector, most of it for Rupert Murdoch’s global network of pay-TV companies. Nearly two-thirds of her career has been in Britain and across Asia. For the past six years, she was at Google in Singapore, where her last job was managing director of agencies, Asia Pacific – a role that had the mother-of-two travelling for three-and-a-half weeks every month. Her team at Google thought initially she was joining the American ABC broadcaster owned by Disney.

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