

## President's Report.

Hello Friends,

Sorry that we couldn't convene the branch meeting we promised. Due to Covid-19 regulations our numbers were reduced to a maximum of 10. We held a Committee meeting instead. We discussed Zoom meetings as a possibility and will trial a Zoom committee meeting on August 4<sup>th</sup> and possibly hold a Zoom Branch Meeting on August 15<sup>th</sup>, if the need arises.

We are compiling a list of phone numbers of people who do not have internet access, and who therefore do not receive emails from us. We need to contact these Friends when we have to cancel or postpone a scheduled event, such as our monthly meeting. Please contact Sue Noske on 0421 020 610 or Penny Tayler on 0416 207 091 if you would like to be placed on the list.

A new Friends bumper sticker has been released: "ABC An Essential Service". A new tote bag is also available, with the same message. (see ABC Friends website and check out the Friends' Shop on the menu bar.) The RMIT Fact Check about the ABC Funding is essential reading for Friends (see the ABC Friends National website)

Keep safe and ABC-focused!!      Regards Sue Noske.

## News from the Editor's Desk.

Thanks to the Grand View Management and staff for access, managed Covid-19 regulation standards and supervision for our committee meeting. The Covid-19 Pandemic has albeit demolished our branch plans for now as we plan for the return to normal. When we return to normal we will need You the members, to remain confident and ready to step up from day 1 to re-establish our branch to its previous high level of performance and reputation in Defence of OUR ABC. Meantime, visit and read our Blue Mountains Branch Website and Facebook for news and comments to catch up with progress and breaking news.

## ABC Friends visit Eden-Monaro By Election.

Thanks to our FABCBM members, Susan Lamont and Wendy Goldsmith for raising the FABC banners at the recent Eden-Monaro by election, here is their report.

It was always predicted by political commentators that the Eden-Monaro by election result would be close. So when Wendy Goldsmith and I had an offer to stay at a friend's home at Dalmeny, north of Narooma on the NSW South Coast and sitting within this vast and diverse electorate, we both jumped at the chance. We thought that it would be possible to coincide our time at Dalmeny with the final days of polling in this by election so that we could support our loved ABC! We contacted our ABC Friends BM President Sue Noske who promptly put us in contact with Peter Lindenmayer, President of the ABCF ACT. Because unfortunately there are no ABC Friends branches actually within the Eden-Monaro electorate, the ACT branch as an adjoining region had stepped up to organise media releases, the production and distribution of posters and the like to highlight for voters the continuing funding challenges facing the ABC and ask them to consider the ABC when casting their vote.

Wendy and I arrived in time to assist with the handing out of flyers in Narooma for the last three days of pre-polling and on the actual polling day of Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July. The flyers that had been provided to us to hand out to voters were quite eye-catching. On one side in colour there was an ABC Media person surveying extensive property damage that occurred somewhere within this electorate at the time of the recent devastating bushfires.

Under the familiar ABC Logo it read: An essential service

The ABC was there for you...will you be there for the ABC? Tell your candidate NO MORE FUNDING CUTS TO THE ABC!

On the reverse side of the flyer was a table that summarised the results of a series of questions that had been put to all 14 candidates standing. These questions covered the role of the ABC, funding levels, independence, support for rural, regional and international coverage of news and events. Importantly candidates were also asked about their future commitment to support the ABC. These responses were summarised in terms of overall support: very high, high, moderate or low with numerous candidates not able to be rated as they were either unable to be contacted or failed to respond.

As has been in the past when undertaking this activity in our own federal Electorate of Macquarie, it was very interesting to note the variety of responses or attitudes in regard to the ABC from not only voters but also from the various party support people who were in attendance throughout the 4 days that we were at the Narooma polling sites. Many voters were happy to tell us they listen to/watch nothing but the ABC or SBS, that they believe that they receive accurate news coverage from the ABC and not 'fake' news as from other media sources and that greatly valued and depended on the emergency coverage from the ABC during the recent late 2019/early 2020 bushfires. Some voters refused to take our flyer but many of those refused to take any flyer. People who displayed any sort of open hostility towards the ABC were fortunately a minority of voters. If a negative comment was made it was usually either along the lines of the ABC receiving too much government funding or being 'biased', however no examples of perceived bias were ever given.

Party supporters who we spoke to who were present handing out how to votes for the Greens, The ALP, The Nationals and the Sustainable Australia Party were universally supportive of the ABC. This was unsurprising as this was the stated position of the candidates they represented. However interestingly, many of those present handing out how to votes on behalf of the Liberal Party, whose candidate rated below the Greens, the ALP and the Nationals in terms of her stated support for the ABC, offered their positive remarks in relation to the ABC.

On the actual polling day, Saturday, a supporter of the Christian Democrat candidate passed some interesting comments. This woman approached us requesting our flyer, she was collecting flyers from all the party supporters, but on realising our flyer was in support of the ABC she promptly said that her party could not support the ABC, 'on moral grounds'. I was both surprised and intrigued by this comment and asked her to explain however she wouldn't (? maybe she couldn't) explain her comment at all. Then she went on to say that anyway the party /candidate could not support the ABC because of its 'bias'. There is the word 'bias' repeated! Again I politely requested her to explain this comment. She said that there were just too many examples to give and with this she walked off!

On the Friday of the pre-polling we were surprised by a visit from the State Labor MP for the Blue Mountains, Trish Doyle. Trish stayed for several hours handing out how to votes on behalf of the ALP candidate Kristy McBain. Wendy and I introduced ourselves to Trish who was delighted to see a couple of fellow Blue Mountains residents participating like we were in the democratic process.

As I said at the outset, it was expected that the result of this by-election would be close, as it ended up being. The Labor candidate Kristy McBain was successful, with the support of preferences from a number of minor parties who, like the ALP, had all indicated a high level of support for the ABC. At the end of the day of course this was the result Wendy and I had worked to achieve, that is to have elected someone from a party that would offer a high degree of support to the ABC going forward.

It will always be difficult if not impossible to know if the work of handing out flyers, displaying posters, undertaking letter box drops, placing advertisements in local newspapers as well as letter writing to the media and the like affects an election outcome in any way, however, we are of the opinion that it is definitely worth the effort on behalf of **OUR ABC!**

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