

President's Report

Dear Friends,

Welcome to a new and eventful year with ABC Friends. Our first meeting of the year will be **Saturday 20th February** at our usual venue, **The Grand View Hotel at Wentworth Falls, at 10am.**

Vale Margaret Foy

As you have been advised, our esteemed Friend Margaret Foy died late last year. Several Blue Mountains Friends were able to attend her funeral at Leura Memorial Gardens on the 21st December.

Margaret was an extraordinarily active ABC Friend for over 30 years. As a passionate supporter and defender of our ABC, she served in many roles, including Blue Mountains Branch President. Margaret was known across Australia for her enduring commitment and dedication to the ABC. She was an activist, a lobbyist, an advisor, a mentor, a true believer in the ABC, and hence a staunch believer in the Friends of the ABC.

Margaret enthusiastically led our branch in campaigns, rallies, forums, local festivals and major events. She represented us at National and State conferences of ABCF, and maintained contact with her wide network of Friends. She was an invaluable font of knowledge of all things ABC, and established a great rapport with many ABC identities, thus securing big-name guest speakers for our meetings and forums. She contributed many times to the ABC Friends Update Magazine; her final contribution was in April 2018, reporting on the Inaugural ABC Public Meeting at Ultimo. Later that year, Margaret was awarded Life Membership of ABC Friends, a rare and prestigious honour.

Over the last two years, Margaret served our branch as Senior Vice President. Despite persistent and varied health problems, Margaret attended as many meetings as she could. She really enjoyed socialising over lunch after our monthly meetings at the Grand View Hotel at Wentworth Falls.

She will be greatly missed, but forever remembered as an inspiring, true Friend of Our ABC.

Sue Noske

Ed Davis, Former NSW President of ABC Friends, has sent this message of condolence to our branch:

'This is very sad news. Margaret will be greatly missed. What a formidable force has left us. It was a privilege to know her and inspiring to see her fierce commitment to the ABC and determination to advance the cause in every way possible. I look back with great appreciation on my interactions with Margaret; at AGMS, dinners, State Conferences and other events. She always let me know if she thought I was on the right track, and if I had strayed !'

Senate Inquiry: Media Diversity in Australia

In response to Kevin Rudd's 501,876-strong petition to the Australian Parliament, the Senate is currently conducting an inquiry into "The state of media diversity, independence and reliability in Australia and the impact that this has on public interest journalism and democracy..."

The full list of the Inquiry's parameters can be found at the link below.

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Mediadiversity

The Inquiry is chaired by Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young. Submissions closed in December. Public hearings commence on February 19. The reporting date was initially set for March 31, 2021; it has now been extended to 4 August, 2021.

A key submission to the Inquiry from the ABC asserted that it is seriously under-resourced to fill the growing spread of “news deserts” in regional Australia caused by the closing of country newspapers. 100 of these papers were NewsCorp papers. The ABC submission points out that the national broadcaster is now the only source of news in many rural communities. According to The Guardian (26/1/2021) *‘The ABC has told the inquiry the closure of hundreds of newsrooms has forced ABC news to work harder to produce local coverage for communities, including placing reporters in outer suburban centres and remote areas.*

‘However, the ABC is struggling to expand its resources into new areas after repeated budget cuts by the Coalition.’

Western Suburbs of Sydney (WSoS) Report.

It is with great relief and even more enthusiasm that we can advise and invite you to attend

The ABC Friends Western Suburbs of Sydney New Branch Inaugural Meeting:

Saturday March 27th 2021 10.30am to 1.30pm

Penrith Senior Citizens Centre, 86 Station Street Penrith.

Onsite free parking.

10 minutes’ walk from Penrith railway station.

Guest Speakers to be confirmed.

Light Lunch provided.

Covid Safe precautions are essential and will apply.

Any questions WSoS@abcfriends.org.au

We look forward to meeting with you and your friends.

Bev and Barry Redshaw

Co-convenors WSoS.

GetUp! Movie: “Murdoch and Morrison vs The ABC”

GetUp! has produced a 24 minute short documentary film that explores and explains the hostility of right wing media and organisations towards the national broadcaster. The film includes a brief history of the influential think tank The Institute of Public Affairs (IPA), an explanation of its ideological position on state-funded agencies such as the ABC and its relationship to conservative political parties. It can be accessed from the GetUp! site or from Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4y5wokhvfc>

Financial membership of ABC Friends

Members can check their financial status and pay their membership at the ABC Friends National site:

<https://www.abcfriends.org.au>

So, in closing -

Next ABC Friends (Blue Mountains) meeting: 10am, Saturday 20th February, The Grand View Hotel, Wentworth Falls. We look forward to seeing you. **Enquiries: Sue Noske: 0421 020 610**

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