

Federal government removes indexation freeze

The big news for us this week is the announcement that the current federal government will **remove the contentious \$84m indexation freeze imposed on the ABC during the Turnbull era and instate \$3.3b in funding for the coming triennium.**

Margaret Reynolds, President, ABC Friends National, has observed in a letter to members:

The early announcement by Minister Fletcher of ABC triennial funding is welcome, but it is important we closely scrutinise the detail and monitor the impact on the ABC for the next three years ...

... many of us recognise that since 2014 ongoing funding cuts to the ABC have had a major impact on the national broadcaster with serious loss of professional staff, some services and Australian content.

Such institutional damage cannot be corrected by ministerial media release.

The ABC needs restoration of those funds which were never received, as well as additional funding to meet ongoing technological challenges that have been ignored for nearly a decade ...

Nevertheless, we do need further commitment from all those who seek to represent us in the national parliament.

We want candidates at this year's Federal Election to commit to:

- * restoration of funds removed from the ABC*
- * the introduction of five-year funding*
- * a specific Australian content fund*

We also need to remind those seeking election that the ABC is an independent statutory body, which operates in the national interest.

Go to our Facebook page for the full text of Ms Reynolds's letter.

... and the backlash ...

Sky News promptly deployed Chris Kenny to attack the ABC and the government's funding decision with such headlines as **'Leftist rot': Government increases ABC funding despite 'clear bias'** (February 07, 2022 - 18:47 PM).

The headline basically says it all, but for the stout-hearted a video of Kenny demanding that Minister Fletcher justify ABC funding can be found at <https://www.skynews.com.au/opinion/chris-kenny/abc-funding-boost-gives-certainty-says-communications-minister/video/6f856f14a026d098cb9168517f74a765>

Kenny singles out *Four Corners* investigations into Trump's connections with Russia and Fox, the conduct of coalition politicians and a high ranking clergyman as evidence of the ABC peddling leftist "conspiracy theories".

In the video (a soft interview masquerading as a hard interview), Mr Fletcher is happy to agree with Kenny's characterisation of ABC editorial policy as "only interested in pushing an anti-conservative cause", saying that such measures as relocating ABC resources from Ultimo to Parramatta will ensure the broadcaster does not present "just an inner city Greens-left mindset."

He also states that "(it) will be said – fallaciously – by the Labor Party, **and by others***, in this campaign ... that in some way, one party is a greater supporter of the national broadcasters than the other," claiming that evidence of Liberal Party's support for the national broadcaster can be seen in the inclusion, last year, of the ABC in the News Media Bargaining Code. (Members may well recall that this was a somewhat *belated* inclusion.)

Inevitably the Murdoch press will continue its shrill (and risible) attacks on the ABC, bolstered by the announcements by the Conservative government in Britain of its intention to introduce an opt-in subscription funding for the BBC, a move that has excited Murdoch commentators in Australia in recent weeks.

No doubt we will hear more about these issues from Jonathan Holmes at our upcoming Zoom event!

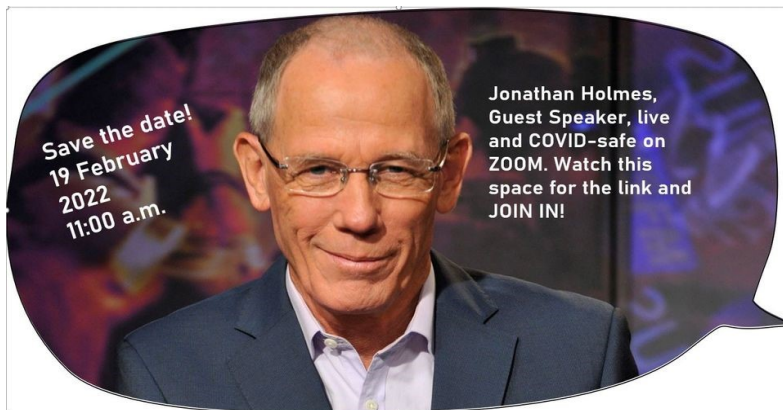
* (Who could he possibly mean? -Ed)

Zoom presentation by Jonathan Holmes (Chair, ABC Alumni)

“Our ABC: Why it’s vital to Australia’s Democracy”

Saturday 19th February at 11am:

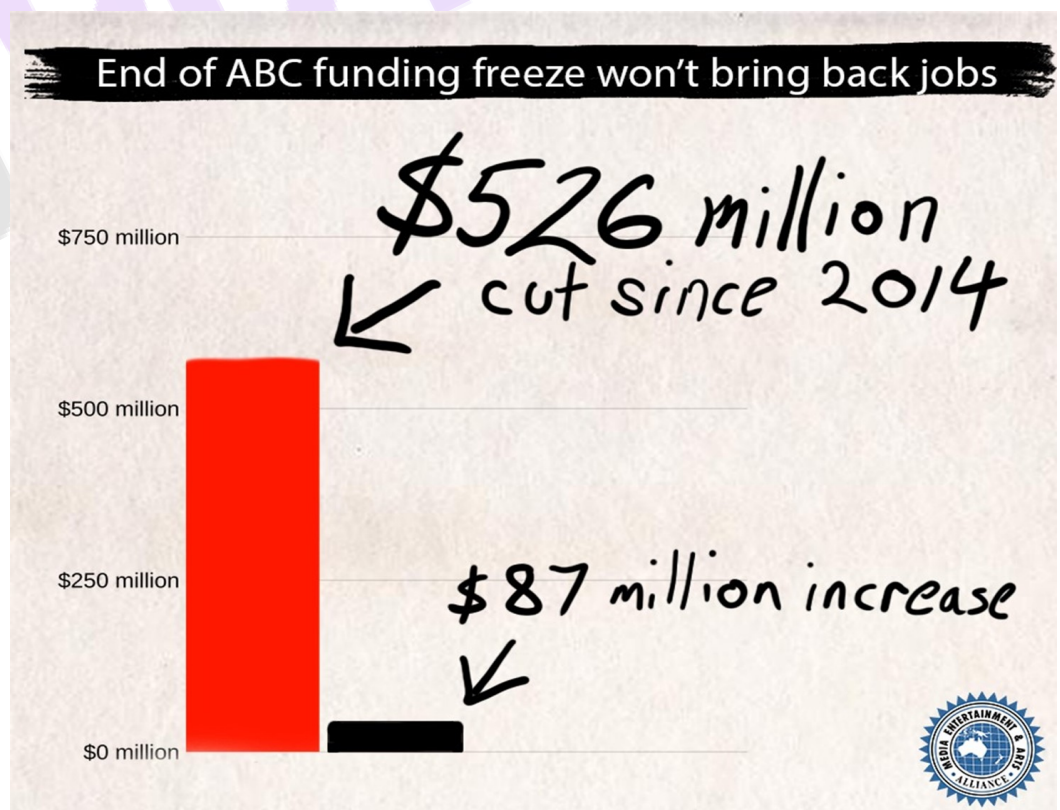
If you haven’t already done so, please register for this great event on our website!



<http://fabcnswbm.org.au/jonathan-holmes-webinar-sat-19-feb-2022/>

The Cuts vs The Removal of the Freeze

This graph (right) from the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) makes clear the scale of the ABC funding deficits since the “No to the ABC” election pledge of 2013.



Letter Writing

If you’re mad as hell and can’t take it any more, pen a letter in support of the ABC. The ABC Friends (Vic) site has a great online resource which provides useful tips:

<https://me.abcfriendsvic.org.au/index.php/write-a-letter/>

We look forward to our members joining Jonathan Holmes on Zoom on Saturday Feb 19!

Hopefully we will be able to soon meet in person at the excellent Grandview Hotel.

-Ian Bate, editor

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