

**IRONY ALERT!**

**THIS ISSUE MAY CONTAIN  
TRACES OF EXTREME IRONY**

## Vice-Presidents' Report

We were privileged to represent the Blue Mountains branch at the ABC Friends NSW & ACT Planning Day in Sydney on 18 February. We presented our branch members' reflections on the following themes:

- Increasing membership numbers and diversity
- Campaigning: The ABC is a public asset and cornerstone of our democracy
- Developing a broader strategic communication strategy
- Providing administrative support to branches – strengthen activism at the local level
- Increasing strategic political engagement strategy
- Increasing range of ABC programs particularly in regional and remote areas

It was a very fruitful planning day, with plentiful ideas and suggestions from branches across the state and territory. Responses are being consolidated and tabulated by (President) Tess Howes and we look forward to receiving the results.

A pleasant sideline: we received some appreciative comments from fellow attendees regarding the energy and commitment of ABCFBM members. Our reputation preceded us!

We look forward to seeing our branch President Sue Noske soon!

**Our next branch meeting: Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> March, The Grand View Hotel, Wentworth Falls, at 10.30am.**

Sue and Ian Bate

## THANK YOU, RUPERT AND DONALD!

**Rupert Murdoch and Donald Trump serve up excellent evidence for the virtues of editorially independent, publicly funded media**

Our last newsletter contained an article on the subject of ACMA's finding that the ABC's 4 Corners program exposing the role played by Fox News hosts in the lead-up to the January 6 Capitol insurrection, "Fox and the Big Lie", had "breached accuracy and fair and honest

dealing requirements of its (*the ABC's*) Code of Practice". The ABC, reporter Sarah Ferguson and ABC Alumni have refuted this finding, while

Murdoch's Sky News turned on the hyperbole tap (while apparently firmly turning off the irony tap) describing ACMA's finding as "a scathing rebuke of the public broadcaster's so-called investigation" and claiming that that the two-part program was now "discredited".

**That was in late December. There have been a few developments since then, as these headlines suggest...**

- **"Fox's Big Lie"** (ABC Media Watch, 27/2/2023)
- **"Rupert Murdoch testified that Fox News hosts 'endorsed' stolen election narrative"** (The Guardian, 28/2/23)
- **"Stunning Rupert Murdoch deposition leaves Fox News in a world of trouble"** (The Guardian, 1/3/2023)
- **"Murdoch admits some Fox News hosts 'endorsed' false claims made by Trump about 2020 election being stolen"** (Sky News (UK), 28/2/23)
- **"Trump doubles down on attacks on Rupert Murdoch and tells him to 'get out of the news business' over Fox News Dominion testimony"** (The Independent, 2/3/23)

Paul Barry in the Feb 27 ABC "Media Watch" edition provides a succinct summary of the court depositions filed by Dominion Voting Systems in its \$1.6b damages case against Fox ([link at end of this article](#)).

Dominion's lawyers will seek to prove that Fox hosts knowingly encouraged and amplified spurious claims from Trump's legal team that Dominion had conspired with the Biden campaign to steal votes from Trump.

The Dominion deposition provides documentary evidence that the Fox executive permitted this because they were concerned that they were rapidly haemorrhaging viewers to rival right-wing networks Newsmax and One America News. On the night of the election, many Fox viewers were outraged when the election coverage "called" Arizona for Biden, making their displeasure loudly known, and threatening to turn to media outlets with less investment in objective truth and ethical journalism than Fox. (*yes, I know ... -Ed*)

On Feb 28, details of Rupert Murdoch's court deposition were revealed, including admissions that he regarded

the Trump team's "stolen election" claims as "bullshit and damaging", that several of Fox News' high-profile hosts had "endorsed at times this false notion of a stolen election", and that he "would have liked us to have been stronger in denouncing" the election fraud allegation.

Ex-president Trump lost little time in lambasting Rupert Murdoch via his social media platform Truth Social, opining: "If Rupert Murdoch honestly believes that the Presidential Election of 2020, despite MASSIVE amounts of proof to the contrary, was not Rigged & Stollen [sic], then he & his group of MAGA Hating Globalist RINOS should get out of the News Business as soon as possible, because they are aiding & abetting the DESTRUCTION OF AMERICA with FAKE NEWS."

In another post, Trump posed the question: "Why is Rupert Murdoch throwing his anchors under the table, which also happens to be killing his case and infuriating his viewers, who will again be leaving in droves - they already are."

Trump bizarrely captures the essence of the Murdoch business model: it is legitimate to feed the audience what they want; if they prefer outrage to truth, then keep the outrage coming (Trump adviser Rudi Giuliani once pithily shouted at a TV interviewer "Truth isn't truth!"). Constantly-stoked outrage presumably equates to subscriptions and healthy sponsorship revenue.

Of course, it also equates to engineering of public opinion.

**With these admissions from the mogul of his American network's disregard for truth, and the ex-president's comments about audience engagement, we have from these powerful individuals a most compelling case for the preservation of editorially-independent, publicly-funded media.**

**In Australia, that's the ABC.**

#### Sources

- "Fox's Big Lie" Media Watch report, 27/2/2023 <https://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/episodes/fox/102027548>
- "Rupert Murdoch acknowledges Fox News hosts 'endorsed' false claims 2020 election was stolen" <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-02-28/rupert-murdoch-deposition-fox-news-dominion-defamation-lawsuit/102033746>

- "Rupert Murdoch testified that Fox News hosts 'endorsed' stolen election narrative" <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2023/feb/27/rupert-murdoch-deposition-dominion-lawsuit-fox-news>
- Murdoch admits some Fox News hosts 'endorsed' false claims made by Trump about 2020 election being stolen <https://news.sky.com/story/murdoch-admits-some-fox-news-hosts-endorsed-false-claims-made-by-trump-about-2020-election-being-stolen-12821810>
- Stunning Rupert Murdoch deposition leaves Fox News in a world of trouble <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2023/feb/28/rupert-murdoch-deposition-fox-news-dominion-voting-systems>
- Donald Trump Rails Against Rupert Murdoch After Latest Revelations In Dominion Defamation Lawsuit Against Fox News; White House Responds – Update <https://news.yahoo.com/donald-trump-rails-against-rupert-194520797.html>
- Trump doubles down on attacks on Rupert Murdoch and tells him to 'get out of the news business' over Fox News Dominion testimony <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/donald-trump-rupert-murdoch-dominion-fox-news-b2292163.html>

#### "Hosts" v "Commentators"

The Guardian (1/3/2023) in its coverage of the Murdoch deposition notes that

*Murdoch tried to make a distinction between the hosts – "commentators" he called them – who were making false claims of election fraud and Fox itself.*

This would seem to beg the question: does the same employment/accountability principle apply to News Corp and Sky News "hosts" in Australia? When the Sky-After-Dark crew espouse highly partisan social and political viewpoints (eg, regarding the ABC), do they do so as "commentators" (who can be adroitly cast adrift by their proprietor if the legal storms set in)? Is, for example, Peta Credlin a "commentator" or a reporter? Or are they now indistinguishable in some dark corners of the media? This article explores the implications.

"Right-wing commentators turning journalism into public relations" (Independent Australia 16/11/2021) <https://independentaustralia.net/business/business-display/right-wing-commentators-turning-journalism-into-public-relations.15750>

**Our next branch meeting: Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> March, The Grand View Hotel, Wentworth Falls, at 10.30am.**

*-Ian Bate, editor*

While every care is taken to ensure accuracy, the editor and publisher cannot assume responsibility for inaccuracies in articles in this Newsletter.

Copyright © 2023. All rights reserved [fabcnsw.org.au](http://fabcnsw.org.au)

Editorial contact: [sribate@tpg.com.au](mailto:sribate@tpg.com.au) Website: [www.fabcnswbm.org.au](http://www.fabcnswbm.org.au)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/fabcnswbm>

