

**WARNING: THIS EDITION
CONTAINS
A CHOKING HAZARD**

Mike Honey: “The ABC Golden Period” (1970s –1990s)

We were privileged at our last meeting to hear our Blue Mountains branch member Mike Honey give his reflections on the national broadcaster’s “golden period”, an account based on his career at the ABC as an editor over those years.

Mike regards those three decades as a “golden” era because “it was a period when the National Broadcaster presented quality programmes that viewers really wanted to see and, by and large enjoy ... it was an exciting and invigorating arena in which to work. It therefore attracted a large number of people whose talent could be developed in a creative or managerial way to provide a large variety of programming catering for a wide audience.” Mike noted that the ABC was the first media organisation to appoint female editors.

Looking back, Mike values the organisational structure at the ABC during those decades, with its five broad areas of programming: **TV Features; Comedy; Drama; News and Current Affairs; and Education.** Creative and management personnel were recruited, trained and nurtured within this structure. Mike feels that budgetary erosion and the move to outsourcing production to independent companies sadly has caused a marked decline in expertise and training opportunities for young people at the ABC.



Mike’s initiation to the ABC began with his first position as an editor for “the somewhat confronting” *The Aunty Jack Show* in 1972.*

He is particularly proud of his work on the drama series *The Leaving of Liverpool*, a 1992 ABC-BBC co-production that brought to its audience an understanding of the often-difficult lives of thousands of British “Home Children” who were forced to emigrate to Australia after World War II. **



Mike’s excellent address left us in no doubt as to the **essential nature of well-funded, editorially-independent public broadcasting in this country.**

*(*The Aunty Jack Show* is still regarded as truly ground-breaking Australian comedy with its blend of absurdism, challenging of gender stereotypes and superb music—perhaps a useful yardstick in appraising the changes in ABC production culture after decades of budgetary threats and implacable hostility from powerful foes—Ed).

** The Screen Australia website notes the significant cultural impact of *The Leaving of Liverpool*:

When this miniseries was first broadcast in Australia and the UK it caused a sensation. Ordinary folk in Australia and Britain had no idea that there were such things as child migration schemes and that orphaned children from the UK were used as slave labour in religious institutions or farmed out as domestic servants in far flung corners of the Empire including Australia, Canada, and Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe.

<https://aso.gov.au/titles/tv/leaving-liverpool/notes/>

Lawson market stall

Chris and Jenny Meaney, Sue Noske and Sue and Ian Bate enjoyed the autumn sunshine on Sunday April 30 at the Lawson Magpie Markets in the grounds of Lawson PS. We engaged in warm and supportive conversations with several passers-by. A worthwhile exercise.



Blue Mountains Branch member in the media

Our congratulations to local branch supporter **Bill Wyman** who has made two recent appearances on the ABCTV News Channel, discussing and explaining the travails of Fox News in its recent court cases with Dominion Voting Systems in the USA and Crikey in Australia.



Bill has also recently had published an op-ed piece in the Sydney Morning Herald entitled 'Tucker for president? What Carlson does next, now he's been outfoxed' (25/4/2023), in which he offers an analysis of "the defenestration of Fox News host Tucker Carlson – star of

the most-watched show in cable news and the most influentially toxic talk-show host in America" and how Carlson and his employer Fox reached this point.

<https://www.smh.com.au/world/north-america/tucker-for-president-what-carlson-does-next-now-he-s-been-outfoxed-20230425-p5d32e.html>

It was great to catch up with Bill in the flesh at the Lawson Magpie Market on April 30.

Which brings us to ... **the choking hazard.**

NB: only read on if you have food or drink at a safe distance.

As the recently re-screened 4 Corners episode, *Fox and the Big Lie* shows, Fox consciously promoted claims from Trump's advisers that the 2020 US presidential election had been "stolen" in order to avoid alienating the cable network's subscriber base. Documents presented in the discovery phase of Dominion Voting Machine's lawsuit against Fox vindicate the 4 Corners report (which was so attacked by Sky News when aired, and subsequently).

However, long-time senior Murdoch apparatchik, Chris Mitchell, apparently actually sees this as a warning to the ABC, judging from these "teasers" for his recent op-ed piece in News Corp's *Australian*:

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/media/confirmation-bias-infiltrates-news-coverage>
Chris Mitchell: Fox News, ABC, guilty of 'adjusting' news to suit ...
3 days ago - Ferguson was pandering to the anti-Trump biases of the ABC's audience in much the same way **Tucker Carlson** was using claims of election fraud to appeal to his audience. Yet **Carlson** lost his job ...

COMMENTARY
Lesson for the ABC from Tucker Carlson's sacking
Opinion-based journalism is easier and cheaper to produce than conventional reporting, and adjusting news coverage to suit the bias of the audience is a problem in the US and Australia.
By CHRIS MITCHELL

It seems the folk at Sky After Dark are in the clear!

Of course, the full piece is behind the News Corp payroll...

Meanwhile, members may be unsurprised to learn that *The Australian* website includes a **page solely dedicated** to its growing archive of attack "stories" on the ABC. A cynic might ask: could these conceivably be commercially and ideologically motivated? Or evidence of the Murdoch press's ongoing crusade for ethical journalism?

Our next branch meeting: Tuesday, 9th May, The Grand View Hotel, Wentworth Falls, at 10.30am.

This will be preceded by a brief meeting of the committee at 10am.

-Ian Bate, editor

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