

BRANCH REPORT

Greetings Friends and Supporters!

Welcome to our final Newsletter for 2023. Big thanks must go to our astute and talented Editor, Ian Bate, for assembling so many compelling and entertaining ABC-related news items throughout the year.

Our AGM, on Saturday 25th of this month will be held at the **Wentworth Falls School of Arts** at 10.00am. **At the conclusion of the AGM at 11am, our special Guest Speaker, Philippa McDonald,** will be introduced (Philippa's inspiring bio is included later in this newsletter). Even if you are unable to attend the AGM, do please come for Philippa's address! Members are encouraged to invite friends to attend this event.

Following a Q and A session with Philippa, branch members and guests will gather for **a communal lunch on the same premises.** Please bring a plate of either savoury or sweet food to share. Tea and coffee will be provided. Our popular raffle will feature a Christmas Hamper, amongst other exciting prizes ... so please remember to bring some cash!

Meeting Location and Dates for 2024.

In 2024 our General Branch Meetings will be held every two months. The venue will be the **Mid-Mountains Community Centre, Lawson,** in the **Joy Anderson Room.** We'll be meeting **Saturday mornings at 10am, on the following dates: 10th February, 13th April, 8th June, 10th August and 12th October.** Our meetings will conclude by 12.00pm, with a morning-tea break around 11am. After our meetings, everyone is welcome to continue our friendly fellowship at one of the local Lawson lunch eateries.

Next year, our branch is introducing Coffee Mornings for our Blue Mountains ABC Friends and friends. These will take place on the alternate months to our General Meetings. The branch committee has chosen various locations for these social occasions, in order to better reflect the residential spread of our branch members. Further details will appear in our first newsletter in 2024.

Our branch Christmas Lunch, our final event for 2023, will be held at the **Grand View Hotel Wentworth Falls on Tuesday 12th December starting at 11.30am.** Further details will be emailed out soon.

Watch out for the **December Update magazine,** the final issue under the current plan of three National Updates per year. **Our branch sincerely thanks and applauds Mal Hewitt** for his 17 years of outstanding leadership and Editorship of Update, a production which has always delivered enlightening, provocative and entertaining items for ABC Friends. We are indeed fortunate that Mal is a member of our active and engaged branch!

Yours in Our ABC,

Sue Noske

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Glenbrook Rotary Markets stall, Nov 4

Branch members manned another successful stall at Glenbrook at the beginning of the month, with a gratifying number of people signing up for our newsletter (and a relatively roaring sale in ABC Friends "merch"!)

Conversations with community members indicated different ways in which people engage with and value the ABC. One radio listener praised the way in which Radio National provides context for current news stories, particularly pertinent considering the Israel—Gaza situation.



Bluey with Toni Thomas at Glenbrook

Some ABC supporters expressed their growing concern about how the ABC's news departments are managing issues of editorial independence and "balance".

One passer-by was motivated to share with us her admiration for the ABC's role as an emergency broadcaster. Kathy Faccin was holidaying at Woodgate Beach, Queensland, in

November 2019 when a major fire broke out.

She emailed Sue Noske the following account, with her blessing to include it in this newsletter:

Hi Sue,

Lovely to meet you in Glenbrook yesterday. My husband, Moreno, and I told you the story of our assistance from the ABC during a bushfire.

Mid-November 2019 we were camping at the NRMA Woodgate Beach Holiday Park and left for the morning to drive around the area to see some sights, planning to have lunch in Bundaberg. We were contacted by the park managers who told us that a bushfire had broken out along the road back to Woodgate Beach and was now closed indefinitely. Eventually the park and the Woodgate Beach community lost power and were unable to sustain communication with stranded guests such as ourselves.

We were able to find motel accommodation in Bundaberg, but updates as to the situation were difficult to obtain from the centralised QFES number

(Queensland emergency services) as there were at that time multiple bushfires burning in Queensland (and also NSW). The Brisbane QFES HQ didn't seem to have the latest updates from the Woodgate Beach fire (at least one operator was not sure where it was).

On the other hand, we were able to phone ABC Wide Bay who contacted reporters closest to the scene and provided the latest updates from local police and firefighters to us. Staff from ABC Wide Bay also rang the next day to check that we were doing OK and had the latest information. By that time information was also being promptly dispersed by the ABC Wide Bay radio station and also on their Facebook page. When we learned in the evening via ABC Wide Bay radio and Facebook that a police escort was available to Woodgate Beach, we were able to confirm with Childers Police and safely return (under police escort) to dismantle our campsite and retrieve our camper-trailer and belongings.

In local shops, fast food outlets and cafes we heard similar stories of visitors and locals taken by surprise by the rapid spread of the fire and the sudden road closure.

ABC Wide Bay provided crucial information during this event, keeping people safe and relieving the stresses of uncertainty.

Hope our little story helps with support for our ABC. You are doing great work for them.

Regards,

Kathy Faccin



Our sincere thanks to Kathy for sharing her story (and for the nice compliment!) The photos below show the scale of the 2019 Woodgate Beach fire.



*Blue Mountains ABC Friends proudly presents **Philippa McDonald**, ABC Alumni member, as their Guest Speaker on Saturday 25th November 2023, at 11.00am, following their AGM, at the Wentworth Falls School of Arts, GWH, Wentworth Falls. All welcome!*



Almost Philippa McDonald's entire journalistic career has been spent on the road as a news and current affairs reporter for ABC News and Current Affairs.

An award winning journalist, she has been at the centre of the media's coverage of Australia's worst bushfires, political upheaval, the disappearance of MH 370, terrorist attacks, earthquakes, mine disasters and coups. She has also been National Arts Reporter, Legal Reporter, Transport and Communications reporter. She's covered everything from the hunt for a serial killer to royal visits, to the billing practices of internationally renowned surgeons, to the Royal Commission which revealed how the nation's most trusted institutions failed children.

As Bushfire Recovery Reporter for ABC News, Philippa focused on how affected communities were recovering from the catastrophic disaster during the pandemic, holding all tiers of government and charities to account. She was also part of the investigation team which produced "The Anatomy of the Mega Blaze."

Her investigative stories have prompted more whistleblowers to come forward and have shone the spotlight on the culture of sexual harassment and bullying within a major government department. Her expose on the suffering of victims of the Granville Disaster prompted an apology from the NSW Premier.

Throughout 2023 Philippa has been working with ABC International Development (ABC ID) in Timor Leste to establish the first English speaking TV Newsroom at RTTL, the country's Public Broadcaster. During the recent referendum, Philippa was a senior producer on The Point at NITV.

Our next branch meeting: Annual General Meeting, 25th November, Wentworth Falls School of Arts, Great Western Highway, Wentworth Falls, at 10.00am.

This will be followed at 11am by an address by ABC alumnus Philippa McDonald.

Luncheon at noon.

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