

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Greetings Friends and supporters!

Our next branch meeting is this coming Saturday, 8th June, at the Mid-Mountains Neighbourhood Centre, 9 New Street, Lawson. We will meet in the Grace Tooth Room, at 10.00am, concluding around midday, with a tea/coffee break around 11.00am. A large ABC Friends poster outside our room will direct you! After the meeting, you may wish to re-group for lunch at 12.30pm at the Lawson Chinese Restaurant, just across the railway line at the Lawson Bowling Club, 2 Loftus St, Lawson. A welcoming venue, with a great range of meals on offer.

A small delegation of Blue Mountains Friends recently met with **Communications Minister Michelle Rowland, and our Federal MP, Susan Templeman**. We were invited by Susan to raise issues of concern with regard to the ABC. To quote Carole Dent's comments on our Blue Mountains Facebook page, our meeting "...was wide-ranging and forthright. The \$6 billion earmarked for the ABC over the next five years will go someways to redressing the damage done, but the loss of expertise was extremely regrettable. Amongst other matters we discussed news, the Indo-Pacific broadcasting strategy about to be released, digital reach and the possible resumption of tours of the ABC."

We'll be reporting on this event at next Saturday's meeting, along with The ABC Friends Excellence Awards, Quentin Dempster's recent email to ABC Friends ("The ABC is suffering"), current and persistent attacks on the ABC and its personnel, and Western Suburbs of Sydney update.

Hope to see you on Saturday 8th!

Yours in Our ABC

Sue Noske

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Coffee Mornings

We have held two of our bi-monthly coffee mornings so far this year. Both have been well-attended. They are an opportunity to meet informally, exchange news and views, and simply keep in touch. The next coffee morning is at **10.00 am, Sat, July 13 at Springwood Sports Club**. (note the change of venue from Glenbrook Panthers because of opening times).



The first coffee morning for the year at Springwood Sports Club

Meeting with Federal Communications Minister Michelle Rowland

At the invitation of our local Federal MP Susan Templeman, a delegation of our branch members met with Minister Rowland at the Springwood Hub on May 23.

Ms Rowland affirmed her commitment to the independence of the ABC and emphasised her appreciation of its continued role as a real-time broadcaster in the increasingly digital on-demand media landscape. She spoke of the \$6bn budget allocation for the ABC for the next five-year cycle and also of the appointment of new ABC chair Kim Williams which was conducted according to formal policy guidelines in contrast to the "captain's pick" procedure undertaken by the Morrison government.

Our members spoke in support of the importance of short-wave radio transmission of ABC programming in reaching remote Australian audiences and those in the Pacific. Ms Rowland responded by informing us of the Asia-Pacific Broadcast Strategy which will be released later in the year and that \$23m has been allocated to enhance ABC broadcasting to the Pacific region.

Minister Rowland also noted the establishment of a First Nations Digital Advisory Group has been established to improve the ABC's reach to remote communities.

She is also pleased that ABC Iview for Kids is expanding its audience.



Our members impressed on the MPs our belief in the need for greater funding, particularly so that the ABC can further invest in news and current affairs. There is a growing concern among critical ABC viewers that underfunded ABC news rooms are increasingly reliant on the Stokes, Nine and News Corp organs for defining the daily news agenda. Ms Templeman noted that this has been a long-established standard practice at the ABC; Nick Franklin pointed out that the mainstream newspaper market is now so highly concentrated, with one of the three main companies particularly partisan in its editorial stance, that this may well be having a deleterious effect on standards of ABC news coverage.

In her closing remarks, Minister Rowlands reiterated her appreciation of the role of the ABC: "Research shows that countries that invest in public broadcasting have the strongest democratic outcomes".

"STORYTELLERS": Lisa Millar and Leigh Sales at the Sydney Writers' Festival

Susan Lamont attended this event. Here is her story.

On Sat 25th May I attended a talk by Lisa Millar and Leigh Sales at the Sydney Writers' Festival. Their talk was entitled 'STORYTELLERS'.

Long-term friends, Lisa and Leigh have given this talk at both Melbourne and Wagga Wagga Writers' Festivals, so their rapport and patter was very engaging. Drawing on their decades of professional experience, their most important messages to budding journalists were:

- have a true sense of curiosity;
- do your research;
- be a genuine listener while at the same time try to anticipate someone's answer and try to plan follow-up questions;
- approach your interviewees with compassion. Be cautious about asking really sensitive questions; allow your subject to tell as much or as little as they are comfortable with.

Both Lisa and Leigh gave numerous examples of how they endeavoured to put these principles into their own practice and how they had tried to hone these skills over many years of journalism. I for one believe that they are both great practitioners of what they espouse and in doing so are great assets to our beloved ABC.

At their book signing session I told them I was a member of ABC Friends Blue Mountains and that we are quite an active branch. They didn't hesitate with granting the photo. Lisa thanked me for what ABC Friends do, which was certainly a nice acknowledgement.

(Editor's note: Sales' and Millar's principles chime with the MEAA Code of Journalistic Ethics. Can the same be said of apparatchiks at certain media companies?)



Laura Tingle's remarks at the Sydney Writers' Festival

The Australian is conducting an obsessive campaign against this exemplary ABC journalist. At the time of writing, six consecutive issues have carried attack pieces; the June 1st issue alone contained five! This matter will be discussed at our June 8 meeting.

Our next branch meeting: 10 a.m., Saturday, 8th June in the Grace Tooth Room at the Mid-Mountains Neighbourhood Centre, 9 New Street, Lawson.

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