ABC Friends Blue Mountains Newsletter
2025— No 4
JUNE

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Greetings Friends and Supporters!

As ABC Friends and Supporters, we must be relieved that a pro-ABC party has been re-elected to government for another three years. However, much more investment in Australia's most trusted news source is required: "In a world of misinformation we need a strong public broadcaster now more than ever" (ABC Friends campaign brochure). The ABC now presents 40% less Australian content than it did a decade ago, and the costs of providing emergency service broadcasts more than doubled in 2023-2024.

Our branch volunteers letter-boxed the ABC Friends campaign brochure during the weeks leading up to the Federal Election on May 3rd. We also letter-boxed the Macquarie Electorate Candidates' Scorecard, which indicated the candidates' levels of support for a fearless independent ABC. We focussed on the three new suburbs of Macquarie (Leonay, Emu Plains and Emu Heights) plus, in the Hawkesbury, North Richmond, Richmond and Bligh Park. A big thanks to our Blue Mountains Friends who stepped out to raise awareness of the essential role the ABC plays in our democracy.

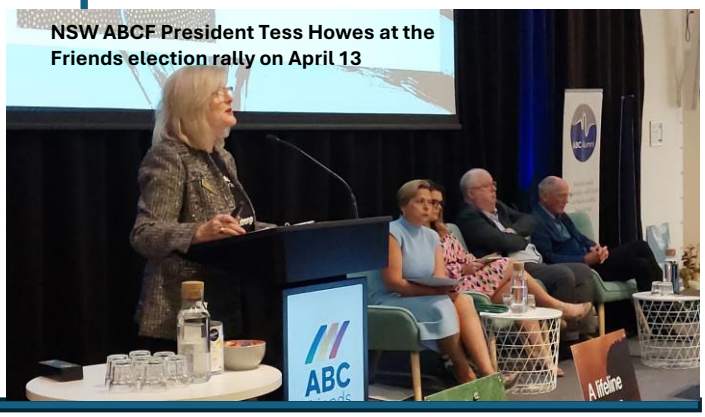
Our next meeting is this coming Saturday, 14th June at the Mid-Mountains Neighbourhood Centre, 9 New St Lawson, in the Grace Tooth Room, at 10am.

We hope you can join us.
Sue Noske
Phone: 0421 020 610

Federal election wrap-up

ABC Friends has produced a summary of the election campaign strategies which were deployed during the 2025 campaign and a preliminary evaluation of these approaches. The strategies included:

- Grassroots advocacy: on-the-ground activity which it is estimated reached over one million Australians.
- Campaign platform: a policy framework and an accountability tool which 'transformed the traditionally nebulous concept of "supporting the ABC" into concrete policy positions that voters could evaluate.'
- Targeted electoral strategy: 25 key electorates were targeted 'according to factors such as electoral competitiveness, local factors and the presence of active ABC Friends membership who could campaign on the ground.'
- Scorecards 'moved the conversation beyond partisan talking points to specific policy commitments. Candidates couldn't simply claim to "support the ABC" without detailing exactly what that support would look like in practice.'
- Digital reach and social media 'proved remarkably successful, reaching over one million individual Australians through social media advertising and online engagement.'



NSW ABCF President Tess Howes at the Friends election rally on April 13

Federal election wrap-up (from page 1)

- Party-level engagement: 'ABC Friends sought formal responses from the ALP, LNP and the Greens, elevating the campaign from local electoral contests to national policy debates.'
- Transparency and accountability: 'The decision to make all responses publicly available through the campaign website demonstrated our commitment to transparency and democratic engagement.'

Federal Communications Minister Michelle Rowland addresses the rally

- Impact and legacy: 'ABC Friends sought to advocate effectively through a combination of old and new campaign techniques.'

The Greens' Senator Sarah Hanson-Young speaks at the April 13 rally

The full article can be read here: https://www.abcfriends.net.au/that_s_a_wrap_election_2025

ABC Alumni Chair Jonathan Holmes

Letters to The Gazette

Carole Dent initiated something of a spirited discourse regarding the ABC when she had the following letter published in the Blue Mountains Gazette in April.

Strong ABC

Malcolm Turnbull, in his recent address at the Corridor of Oaks in Faulconbridge (BMG 26.3.25) emphasised the need to keep our democracy strong by participation. Nations with strong democracies are usually found to have a strong, independent public broadcaster. In the coming elections people who hold democracy dear will be voting for the candidates who support our public broadcaster by keeping it free - from ads and subscriptions - strong (with appropriate restorative and guaranteed funding) and independent. ABC Friends Blue Mountains is non-political but urges people to consider this important issue and engage. https://fabcnswbm.org.au/

Carole Dent, Woodford.

This drew responses from a couple of conservative correspondents who expressed the (well-worn) line that the ABC "has for decades displayed a leftist and 'woke' perspective with little room for conservative opinion."

Carole's riposte was published in the next edition – a succinct and powerful defence of the national broadcaster:

Trusted source

Re Xandro Lombardi's letter about the ABC: The ABC is governed by a charter, set down by Parliament, which requires the corporation to provide 'informative, entertaining and educational services that reflect the breadth of our nation'. It must exercise 'due impartiality', as laid out in its editorial policies on objectivity and impartiality.

The ABC is constantly monitored for any commercial, political or ideological bias. There isn't a properly conducted academic study that supports the belief of ABC

Letters to The Gazette (from previous page)

detractors that it has a left-wing bias. Upheld complaints about impartiality breaches are a tiny fraction of overall published output. It's not required that equal treatment and time be given to every perspective either. So Holocaust and climate-change deniers don't get equal time.

The ABC has been subject to 15 reviews since 2000. It's an easy target for governments, conservative especially, who would like to see it privatised or 'muted'. Why? Because the transparency and accountability that independent investigative journalism demands is uncomfortable. The Murdoch empire has had the ABC in its sights for years.

The ABC is not perfect, that is acknowledged. But it is the most trusted media organisation in the country. Australians are taking its continued existence for granted at their peril. The emergency service it provides alone has trebled in recent years, while the funding remains woefully inadequate. Don't let them take it away.

Carole Dent, Woodford.

Nick Franklin was also moved to take up the cudgels.

Range of views

In his criticism of the ABC, correspondent Xandro Lombardi makes a fundamental error in claiming that the national broadcaster only allows left wing views. In recent days he could have found a smorgasbord of right-wing fare including an extended interview on *7.30* with Pauline Hanson, an entire program devoted to Bob Katter and numerous appearances by Peter Dutton and his shadow cabinet on radio, TV reports and online. Minor party MPs like Jacquie Lambie and independents such as Andrew Wilkie also get frequent air time. It's true that the ABC could do better, but the decline in its coverage started when Tony Abbott broke a pre-election promise not to cut its budget and slashed ABC's spending so severely 1,000 jobs were lost along with many programs. If Mr Lombardi wants to sample an example of unmitigated bias I suggest he try Sky after dark. Meanwhile Peter Dutton has made clear that if he wins the election the ABC could be up for further cuts if it doesn't meet his idea of broadcasting excellence.

Nick Franklin, Katoomba.

Although the ABC now faces a far-less adversarial Federal government than it might have done, the attacks on the broadcaster from the political right continue (let us not forget Dutton's characterisation of the ABC as part of the "hate media" during the final days of the election campaign). ABC Friends are encouraged to use the Letters pages of the newspapers to advocate for a well-funded, editorially independent ABC.

The Flaming Eye of Murdor Never Sleeps

Despite the recent election result, Newscorp's flagship *The Australian* remains unrelenting in its criticisms of the ABC along with constant reminders of its cost to taxpayers *("The ABC is due to receive $1.23b in government funding in FY 2025-26")*.

Such criticism can range from such risible and obsessive nit-picking as ridiculing a light-education program called "The Fix-It Chicks" (it purportedly dispensed ideas and hints – *at the taxpayers' expense* - about drying clothes in an apartment setting) to scabrous allegations of the broadcaster credulously playing the part of 'useful idiot' for Hamas.

This was the allegation from Australian and Sky-After-Dark denizen Chris Kenny on June 7 in the 'Inquirer' section (quite the misnomer) of the weekend edition: "ALL THE DRIP-FEED 'NEWS' THAT FITS HAMAS AGENDA".

Kenny's opinion is that any reporting by the ABC (and in particular, Middle-East correspondent Matt Doran) that looks at the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the West Bank from a Palestinian perspective rather than following the Netanyahu government line is just simply not on:

> *On Wednesday night the ABC reported "at least 27 Palestinians have been killed", claiming it was a case of "the hungry seeking food and encountering gunfire" as it ran unverified firsthand accounts of shootings, presumably filmed by media under the control of Hamas.*

It also ran comments by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights spokesman Jeremy Laurence that "attacks directed at civilians constitute a grave breach of international law and a war crime". Despite the fog of war and most of the information coming from a listed terrorist group, Israel was again being fitted up for a war crime. The only scepticism evident in the reporting was over an IDF video showing Hamas terrorists firing at civilians – the ABC reported it was filmed at a different location to the aid centre, which hardly seemed the relevant point. The ABC's reporter in Jerusalem, Matthew Doran, reliant on the same Hamas-controlled information drip-feed from Gaza, said: "Israeli officials continue to accuse Hamas of trying to undermine the new private aid system in Gaza." This is the credulity dynamic that plays out in the reporting – the vision, comments and information supplied by murderous jihadists are reported doe-eyed while everything Israel says is reported with a cocked eyebrow.

Kenny's ire is not directed exclusively at Australia's national broadcaster. Other media organs around the globe that commercially compete with the Murdoch family's holdings also cop the Kenny serve: The New York Times, CNN and the BBC also stand accused of promoting Hamas propaganda by not blithely accepting IDF accounts of what happens on the ground in Gaza and the occupied territories.

The (British) BBC has also drawn the ire of the (US) Trump administration, with The Australian publishing this story on June 5: 'US SLAMS BBC REPORTS ON GAZA AID KILLINGS'.

In the administration's strongest criticism yet of the BBC, Karoline Leavitt, Donald Trump's press secretary, accused reporters of taking Hamas' word as 'total truth'… Ms Leavitt said the White House was trying to get to the bottom of the reports of Gazan deaths. However, she added: "Unfortunately, unlike some in the media, we don't take the word of Hamas as total truth. We like to look into it when they speak … unlike the BBC."

As Kerry O'Brien said in an ABC Friends campaign video back at the beginning of the campaign period*: *"After 60 years in journalism, I can't think of a more confusing time to know who to trust in the media, when truth has become such a corrupted commodity. We need a strong independent ABC that's fearless in presenting the facts we need to know, not one that's intimidated by politicians or special interest groups."*

* (for which he was ineffectually lampooned by The Australian's Media Diary apparatchiks: "*… the Murdoch media is also on the attack in lock-step," thundered Red Kezza in an email (with video!) to the 77,000-strong subscriber base of ABC Friends last week …*")

On a (thankfully) lighter note:

Satire genius Jonathon Biggins gets to meet Blue Mountains ABC Friends activists at ABCF North Sydney!

NEXT ABCF (BLUE MOUNTAINS) BRANCH MEETING: 10.00am, Saturday, 14th June, at the Mid-Mountains Neighbourhood Centre, 9 New St, Lawson, in the Grace Tooth Room.

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

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