



VIC NEWS

**Issue 6
Election 2001**

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How to vote ... for the ABC



*FABC received responses to its questionnaire from the ALP, Democrats and Greens parties.
To date it has received none from the Liberal, National and One Nation parties.*

**Last Chance
to
Support the ABC
Before the Election**

Your Support for both activities is important.

Sack the MD

The reign of ABC
Managing Director,
Jonathan Shier,
has been one of turmoil
and instability. Staff
morale has plummeted
and television program
quality declined.

***The ABC Board
must act.***

**Rally
outside the ABC
Board meeting**

**Wed 31 October
8.15am sharp**

**ABC
Southbank**

**Friends of the ABC
AGM
Thursday 1 November**

**7pm for 7.15pm start
to 9pm**

**Iwaki Auditorium
ABC Southbank Centre
cnr Southbank Blvd & Sturt St**

**Guest Speaker:
Terry Laidler**
former ABC journalist
and presenter



Vote for the ABC

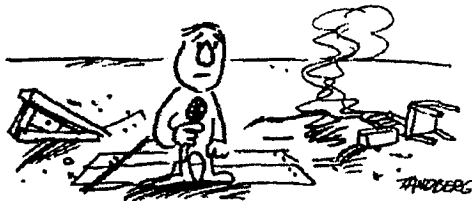
To ensure the ABC remains independent from government and commercial influence - able to report without fear or favour - it must be well funded and funded in a manner that ensures its independence. The country's national public broadcaster must be resourced to provide both traditional and emerging services in the new digital environment. Governments have a responsibility to ensure the ABC survives and thrives in its role as a crucial producer and disseminator of culture and information in Australia.

The parties

...on funding

- **Liberal-National Coalition Government** has slashed ABC annual funding by \$66 million (12%). It has denied the broadcaster full funds for its conversion to digital technology.
- **ALP, Democrats and Greens** have committed their parties to increase ABC funds. The Greens and Democrats support restoration of funds to the 1985/86 level (in real terms), the peak year for ABC funding. Labor has promised to provide additional funds to the ABC, with the amount to be specified during the election campaign.

*AN ABC REPORTER IN A
THIRD WORLD COUNTRY?*



*... OR AN ABC REPORTER
AT THE ABC?*

... on Board independence

- **Liberal-National Government** has stacked the ABC Board with its supporters.
- **ALP, Democrats and Greens** promise to introduce procedures giving greater emphasis to appointees having appropriate skills, and the readiness to act in the interests of the ABC. They promise to introduce greater transparency in the Board appointment process and in the operation of the Board.

All parties believe the final decision to appoint Board members should remain with the government of the day, but differ on the filtering assessment processes. The Democrats favour involvement of a joint party parliamentary committee. The Greens support the UK system of an independent appointments body established by parliament to assess appointments to public office. Labor promises to appoint people of merit who will discharge their public interest obligations to the ABC.

The ABC is funded on a triennial basis. Triennial funding is essential to promote an arms-length relationship with government.

Funding to the ABC has steadily declined. Between 1985/86 (the peak year of ABC funding) and 1998/99 ABC funding dropped 34.1% in real terms.

The Coalition Government was elected to office in 1996 with an unequivocal commitment to maintain ABC funding and Radio Australia. Shortly after being elected, it cut the ABC's annual funding base by \$66 million (12%).

This cut to the ABC's triennial funding has not been reversed. The Government has provided some short-term funds for specific areas of the ABC. But choosing what it will and will not fund is government interference in the ABC's responsibility to determine how it meets its Charter obligations.

Past governments fully funded major changes in technology. This Government has provided insufficient funds for the ABC's costly conversion to digital technology, which contrasts sharply with its "handout" of billions of dollars worth of digital spectrum to commercial broadcasters.

What's happened since '96

- 20% staff loss.
- News & current affairs budget cut.
- Cuts to library and archives.
- Radio Australia diminished.
- Specialist program units lost.
- Increasing moves to commercialisation.
- Consideration of some services being provided on a user-pays basis.
- Direction by the Government that TV production, other than news and current affairs, should be outsourced.