

Review of the 2022 Federal Election Campaign of ABCF Victoria

Chronology and Structure of the campaign

The 2022 federal election campaign of ABC Friends Victoria (ABCFV) actually started in 2020. During that year the Committee of Management (CoM) developed, mostly over Zoom, a Strategic Framework for 2021-2024 for ABCFV. The actions in that plan included:

- Develop a forward work plan for development of the campaign for the next Federal election.
- Establish and maintain a data base of all Victorian MPs, electorate boundaries, and the preselection processes of the major political parties.
- Ensure that there are vibrant active Groups in all marginal Federal seats.

In February 2021, the Communications Subcommittee of ABCFV (CSCV) started to develop strategies and materials for campaigning, since there was speculation about the election possibly being held as early as July 2021. The Southern Bayside Group (SBG) met with the member for Dunkley in April 2021 to confirm her commitment to the ABC, and other ABCFV Groups started their planning. The communications strategies included going “early” in the campaign, in order for our messages to not be swamped in the formal campaign itself.

The beginning

In March 2021, Get Up produced a campaign video highlighting cuts to ABC funding. We formed an alliance with Get Up and the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) to run a major rally/event in the Hawthorn Town Hall (HTH), in the heart of the Kooyong electorate of the then Treasurer Josh Frydenberg, on the weekend preceding the Federal Budget in early May. (Thanks to Marcus May, who did most of the work).

Preparation for the rally included printing banners and flyers and corflutes, so in effect the HTH event was the launch of the ABCFV campaign. Our early messages were:

ABC: Trusted, Valued, Underfunded, and

Its Your ABC: Fight for it.

In late May 2021, ABC Friends National (ABCFN) held a 3-day meeting in Canberra, and one of the decisions made was to form a Campaign Steering Group (CSCN) for ABC Friends, to consist of all the Presidents of National and the States. From then on, the CSCN met monthly (mostly) and shared information about state activities, in an attempt co-ordinate the overall campaign. Later in 2021 the President of ABC Alumni, Jonathan Holmes, and Helen Grasswill, joined the CSCN in order to co-ordinate the ABCF and Alumni campaigns.

In June 2021 it was decided to concentrate on six marginal seats in the Victorian campaign – Casey, Chisholm Corangamite, Deakin, Dunkley, and Higgins. They were the seats seen to be marginal

enough for our pro-ABC messages to influence voters, and manageable enough for us to run an effective seat-specific campaign. We discussed other seats – Indi, Latrobe, Kooyong, Flinders, and Goldstein – but for various reasons decided to focus on just these six seats. (McEwan was later added to the list at the urging of our members).

A Phased Campaign

In August 2021 the CSCV developed a Marginal Seats Campaign Plan, (thanks to Carol Stuart) which was the beginnings of our detailed election planning. It was decided to run a Phase 1 Awareness Raising Campaign during the Sept-Dec period, involving advertising in shopping centres, and on billboards and buses in four specific electorates – Chisholm, Corangamite, Dunkley and Higgins – seats where we had active ABCFV Groups.

About \$35K was invested in this marginal seat pre-election awareness raising, including an attempt to create a social media presence for ABCFV, particularly on Facebook. One thing we discovered was that publicly owned buses will not carry “political” messages – the only one of our messages which was acceptable was *ABC: Australia’s Heartbeat*.

It was soon realised that we needed professional help if we were to run a really effective campaign. Sophie Arnold, who had been helping us with social media and communications strategies, was formally engaged as the Election Campaign Manager, and promptly took over the management of the planning and delivery of the campaign. From December 2021 onwards, she and the CSCV produced monthly strategies, detailed plans for each seat, and coordinated the development and supply of campaign materials. She also reported to the Executive Subcommittee of ABCFV on political strategy and financial matters for the campaign.

Sophie’s work was complemented by the engagement of a Social Media Campaign Officer, Tom Hall, from February 2022 onwards. From Feb to April 2022 Sophie and Tom drove a highly targeted campaign of Facebook ads in the targeted seats, as a deliberate strategy to get ABCFV messages circulating before the formal campaign commenced.

The all-in planning workshop

In February 2022 there was an “all-in” planning workshop for ABCFV, at which general campaign strategies and seat-specific activities were agreed and planned. Almost everyone involved in the campaign attended the workshop. Teams formed for each of the six selected seats, and the materials seen to be needed were discussed and coordinated. From then on, the campaign became six (co-ordinated) campaigns, with a seventh (McEwen) added in April. Alongside these seven campaigns, the ABCFV Groups in Ballarat and Bendigo were running their own local campaigns. So, in effect, at the height of the campaign, it was nine seat-specific campaigns.

In three of the nine seats - Casey, Deakin, and McEwen – there was not an active ABCFV Group already in existence. In these cases, the ABCFV members in that electorate were invited to a Zoom discussion on the campaign, then a face-to-face meeting, from which they designed and

implemented their own campaign. In at least one of these three, Deakin, we hope to see a new ABCFV Group emerge as a result of the relationships formed during the campaign.

Politics intervenes

The campaign was thrown a bit off balance in March, when Senator Bragg, an anti-ABC LNP member, demanded that the ABC stop ABC Friends from using the ABC Lissajous logo in our materials (which we had been doing for over 40 years). At the request of the ABC, we promptly set out to change the design of our own logo and all our materials and replace all campaign materials with new versions. This included replacing already-running ads, and sundry other collateral already in use. The changes were completed within two weeks (thanks to our designer Cate Broadbent) at a cost of about \$15K.

A further challenge emerged when the government announced 3-year funding and the re-instatement of funding indexation for the ABC & SBS. This narrowed the gap between the LNP and ALP policies on the ABC and required an adjustment to one of our key messages: *The ABC: Trusted, Valued, Still Underfunded*.

The election is called

The six-week federal election campaign was formally launched in April, with an election date set at 21 May 2022. By then we had almost all our materials in place or on order.

One of the regular communications with ABCFV members and supporters which was used throughout the campaign was the Vic Division newsletter, normally fortnightly but weekly during the formal campaign. Other communications materials used included corflutes, posters, flyers, stickers, banners, and magnetic signs (on cars), plus advertising and social media posts.

Campaign tactics used included door knocking, letter boxing, letter writing, attending candidate forums, train station handouts, meeting with candidates, holding banners on bridges, webinars, videos, polling booth handouts, ads in cinemas, and talking to people whenever possible. In addition, thanks to Ivor Donahue (SBG Convenor), a major rally was held in front of the office of Senator Van, an anti-ABC LNP member, at which Mark Dreyfus, now Attorney General, committed the (new) government to support the ABC.

The ABCFV campaign was run in parallel with, and coordinated with, the ABCF National campaign, which was driven by the ABCF NSW Division and the professional services of Populares. A very successful petition was developed, attracting thousands of signatures. Messages were tested with targeted emails and Facebook ads, leading to a social media campaign. Fundraising with the ABCFN database was very successful for the campaign and contributed almost half of the costs of the Victorian campaign. The new ABCFN database of over 60,000 people should be a good base on which to build memberships, support, and future campaigns.

Throughout the campaign we kept close contact with allied organisations. We promoted the videos of ABC Alumni, and alumni were key speakers at events. We promoted the videos and ads of Get Up

and helped with distribution of their corflutes. We also promoted the research of the Australia Institute and the arguments of the MEAA about the threat to the ABC.

Evaluation?

What follows is an attempted summary of our evaluation of the ABCFV federal election campaign, based on feedback received from those involved, including contributions to the whiteboards at our recent post-election get-together. An attachment provides an analysis of the social media campaign which complemented the general ABCFV campaign. This evaluation represents the views of the authors (only) and does not attempt to be comprehensive.

Strategies and Tactics

The strategy of choosing a limited number of selected seats was appropriate, and it was easier to implement in seats where we had an existing (or nearby) active ABCF Group. Where that was the case – Chisholm, Corangamite, Dunkley, Higgins – the votes went strongly the way we advocated. Success has many parents, and ABCFV was one of them in these 4 seats.

The result was mixed in the other 5 seats, but in no case did the swing go against what we were advocating. In Deakin our campaign was particularly effective (thanks to Barbara Baker & Lee Atalla), and the sitting anti-ABC LNP member was almost defeated. In passing it is worth noting that it may be that election campaigns are good vehicles for the formation of ABCF Groups.

The strategy of going early with our messages was a mixed blessing. We were obvious early in the pre-campaign period, which meant that our pro-ABC message was seen by many before other messages swamped it. However, it also drew attention to our campaign materials, and catalysed the antagonistic and intimidating actions of Senators Henderson and Bragg, which cost our campaign time and money. On balance we would advocate going even earlier, and with even sharper messages, to both have an early impact and to flush out the opposition.

Messages and Impacts

We do not have direct evidence of which of our messages best resonated with voters, but we have a lot of anecdotal evidence that our messages were all clear enough to be understood. Perhaps the most popular message (*Democracy depends on a strong ABC*) resonated because the then government was seen to be corrupt and undermining democracy. Perhaps the most encompassing message (*ABC: Trusted, Valued, Still Underfunded*) was less powerful because the then government seemed – wrongly - to have already responded to the funding issue. These comments are only speculation - we will never know the precise impact of the respective messages used in the campaign. We do know that different messages resonate with different audiences, and that a small number of clear, simple, direct messages are needed in political campaigns.

It is often suggested that repetition is the key to impact when it comes to marketing, particularly in advertising. We did not have the budget for substantial reach or repetition, so our messages had to work as thought provocation, more than rote repetition. We think our messages generally worked well, and were placed well, but a larger budget may have enabled greater impact. However, there is not a direct relationship between spend and impact, as the UAP has demonstrated.

Materials and Timing

Feedback from ABCFV members on the campaign included commentary on the specific materials used. The messages used were seen to be generally appropriate, but there could have been more focus on having messages that linked the ABC to the three major issues of the campaign – integrity, gender, and climate change (included in the social media campaign). There were requests for less wordy flyers and leaflets next time, and requests for content that was not covered, such as good news stories, and an anti-News Corp message. There was also comment that the A5 flyers used were too glossy, and therefore slippery to use, but that the A5 size is very handy for campaign handouts.

The timing of supply of materials was a challenge in the campaign, because the turn-around time from decision to printed version varied for each document. An already designed flyer could be provided in bulk within 24-48 hours, but a magnetic car sign needed a week. As a result, we needed to guess when each document was needed and in what quantity. Some materials arrived late (e.g., stickers), and some materials (e.g., posters and corflutes) were over-ordered. Feedback suggested we should have had more magnetic car signs and more diverse flyers, and we should have lined up locations for posters in advance of the campaign. The necessity to change materials to remove the ABC logo delayed the production of some of the in-bulk materials (e.g., flyers) before the campaign.

What could have been

Feedback also suggests that there was a lot more we could have done if we had the resources, both people and finances. Where how-to-vote or “score” cards were produced (Corangamite, Corio, and Deakin) they were seen to be very effective in guiding voters. If we had the volunteers, we could have been handing them out at all early polling booths and on polling day. How to vote/score cards could also have been developed and handed out in other seats. Similarly, corflutes could have been displayed at polling booths, which presented the how-to-vote/score card in an enlarged form.

More resources could have enabled better preparation, such as lining up shops and organisations to display our posters before the campaign started. We could have developed an ABC-friendly data base in each electorate and then enlisted their help and support during the campaign itself.

Other “more of” suggestions were: more letters to candidates and media; more how to vote directions; more exchanges between the parallel seat-specific campaigns; more concentration on Liberal-held electorates; starting earlier with everything in the whole campaign; better ways to sign up members when contact is made; more attendance at local events and meetings; and more use of targeted social media (including Twitter) during the campaign.

On the other hand

Feedback suggests that there were many things that our members liked about the campaign. People really liked the magnetic car signs, the mobile billboards, the ABCFV pens, banners on bridges, the flyers in Mandarin, the how to vote/score cards, and the capacity to print seat-specific materials locally.

Members also enjoyed meeting other ABCFV volunteers and working with them on a common cause. There was general agreement that the best impact was achieved when actually talking to people – at train stations, stalls, at polling stations, and when they noticed a corflute or magnetic car sign. This resonates with the success of the community campaigns of independent candidates, where person-to-person contact underpinned their success at the ballot box.

Overall

The campaign was effective and successful but could have been even better. With a bigger budget (we spent about \$195K in all) we could have started earlier and reached further with our materials and messages. With more volunteers we could have developed more how to vote/score cards and presented them to more people as they went to vote. And it is always possible to spend more on advertising and on social media.

Most importantly, the election result was what we sought – a pro-ABC parliament and government.

ABCFV Federal Election Campaign Evaluation (Social Media)

Summary

The ABC Friends Victoria social media election campaign began in early February 2022 and concluded at the end of May. The aim of the social media campaign was to educate social media users about three primary points:

1. What, who and why the ABC is important
2. Why the ABC is in danger
3. How to vote in the federal election to protect the ABC

Referring to the three points, the first was and will remain a constant presence in future communications and marketing material from ABC Friends Victoria. The second point held some closer specificity towards the specific election campaign period, with the ongoing hostility of the Coalition government towards the ABC inciting this theme of danger. A non-Coalition government, like the status quo, now makes this second point a little less relevant. The third point was the most specific to the election period. Digital content and other material supporting this point came later in the campaign through providing social media users clear guidance on how to vote for a strong future for the ABC.

Effective delivery of the primary points formulated the crux of the social media strategy for the election campaign. From early February to late March, digital content educated users about the ongoing significance of the ABC as a public broadcaster, the funding model, and its importance to a healthy democracy. Leading into April, digital content shifted to highlight the Coalition's ongoing hostility towards the ABC, demonstrating that a re-elected Coalition government would threaten the future of ABC. In educating users about this hostility and its impact on the ABC, late April and into May saw digital communications provide users with guidance on how their vote could protect the future of the ABC. Delivery of the strategy concluded on May 21, with a fantastic election result for ABC Friends Victoria. The tangible impact of the social media campaign will always assume an element of the unknown, however the insights below suggest engagement followed a positive trajectory reaching an impactful climax on election day.

Digital communications created and published for the social media campaign included audio, static/visual and video content. Facebook, and Instagram received the most attention of the social media platforms. This was largely intentional, with Instagram being the most appropriate digital environment for posting and consuming digital content. Furthermore, with Instagram users tending to come from a younger age demographic, this provided a further reason for ABCFV to expand its involvement with the platform. Facebook remains and will continue to be an important platform for ABCFV.

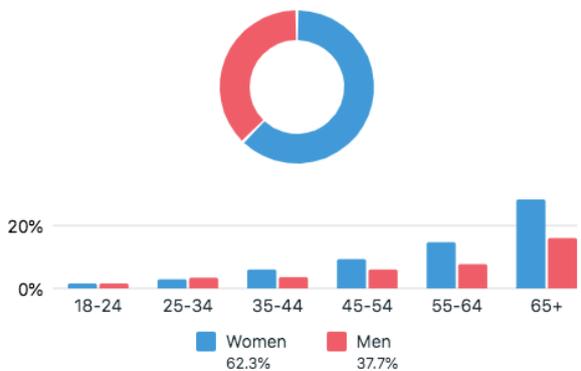
Social Media Insights

	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn	Youtube	Twitter
July 2021	1098	215	1436	10	N/A
May 2022	1314	375	1546	12	37

Facebook Page followers ⓘ

1,314

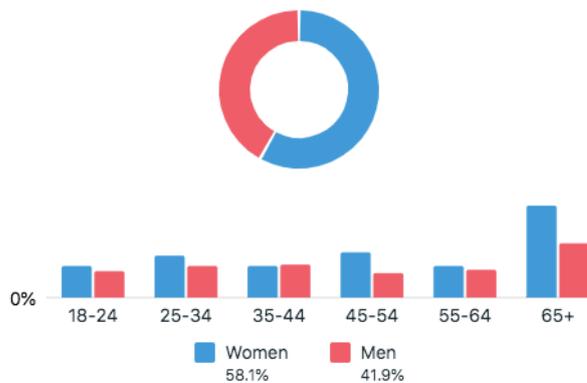
Age & gender ⓘ



Instagram followers ⓘ

375

Age & gender ⓘ



Facebook Page reach ⓘ

8,284 ↑ 102.2%



Instagram reach ⓘ

4,795 ↑ 33.2%



Ad trends

Export ▾

Paid reach ⓘ

3,975 ↑ 22.8%

Paid impressions ⓘ

5,548 ↓ 0.6%



Platforms

Instagram

Instagram is a social media platform that rewards visually appealing content that is consistent and engaging. A focus on creating easily digestible infographics and images is the best way to maximise engagement and increase the following on Instagram. Over the course of the campaign period, the ABCFV Instagram page gradually increased in followership, particularly during the final weeks before election day. To create content in line with the social media strategy, the nature of infographics adapted between February to May, to suit the points of the election strategy. Below are some examples of the infographics:

- Example: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZ0tHy1hzt5/>
- Example: https://www.instagram.com/p/CaGfK_xhc0G/

By using the election strategy to guide the nature of posts created for Instagram, content gradually built from educational posts in February and March, leading to content guiding users on how to 'vote for your ABC'. Examples of content produced for the latter months, closer to the election, can be found below:

- Example: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZ0tHy1hzt5/>
- Example: https://www.instagram.com/p/CaGfK_xhc0G/

In delivering this three-step strategy, followers were aware of:

1. Why the ABC is so important yet under serious threat.
2. How their vote can make a difference.
3. How to vote to make a difference.

In conclusion, Instagram is the most appropriate platform for ABCFV engaging with a younger audience. Simply through remaining active on the platform, ABCFV will be able to expand its influence over young people. Visually appealing and informative content that is consistent will be a suitable recipe for success on Instagram. Through engaging more with young people on Instagram, general awareness and understanding of the ABC, and ABCFV will increase. It is unlikely that persons younger than 30 will then become members of ABCFV however, there is a strong possibility that a strong Instagram presence will translate to an increase in memberships among persons older than 30 are using Instagram.

Facebook

Facebook is the most established social media platform for ABCFV for multiple reasons:

1. ABCFV's historical use of Facebook to share and publish content to followers.
2. Popularity of Facebook, regardless of age.
3. Older persons using the platform as their primary choice of social media. It's unlikely this will change, meaning it's in ABCFV's best interest to continue pushing content and engaging with followers via this platform.

To deliver the campaign strategy, ABCFV used Facebook in several key ways:

>>Cross-sharing ABCFV Instagram posts to Facebook via Hootsuite. Hootsuite allows you to schedule posts on multiple social media platforms. The cross-sharing ensured Facebook followers who do not use Instagram, were able to view all ABCFV digital content. The cross-sharing was also intending to attract ABCFV Facebook followers across to the Instagram page, however this was not very effective. This is likely a result of two differing audiences on Facebook and Instagram, with the latter remaining a relatively foreign concept to many of our Facebook followers.

>>Sharing ABC Alumni content - ABC Alumni posted informative videos using quality film-making skills, discussing various topics relating to the ABC. These were published by ABC Alumni and resultantly shared by ABCFV on Facebook.

>>Sharing ABCFV website content - Thanks to Jeff, Michael etc. for the consistency of written articles, analysis and links to important ABC - related news. Facebook is the most effective platform to disseminate internally produced content, while still providing an easy link for users to continue engaging on the ABCFV website.

Overall, Facebook appears to be an effective, long-term tool for ABCFV.

LinkedIn

ABC Friends Victoria is limited in its impact on LinkedIn. The primary issue relates to people connecting with ABCFV's personal page on LinkedIn. This page has over 1000 connections, which is a very solid and comparable figure to the ABCFV Facebook page. However, the personal page is not an effective tool for ABCFV to establish presence as an organisation on LinkedIn, with personal pages ideally used for individuals only. Conversely, we do have a linked ABCFV business page on LinkedIn, however this page has only a few hundred followers. Unfortunately, LinkedIn does not allow organisations to transfer their personal page following into the business page. Resultantly, this significant difference in following between the two pages limits the impact of ABCFV on the LinkedIn platform, which can be used to share articles and news, as well as directly engaging with other LinkedIn users. Resultantly, if ABCFV sees long term benefit in having a strong presence on LinkedIn, then the ABCFV business profile must be built from the ground up. Benefits of the business page include:

- Legitimising ABCFV presence on LinkedIn.
- Creating specific showcase pages to highlight individual initiatives and successes.
- Can be used when individuals link their personal profile to ABCFV in their employment or volunteering history. The logo and correct name (ABCFV) will then appear on their profile. This brings general benefit through increasing the presence of ABCFV in the LinkedIn ecosystem.
- Allows ABCFV to plugin to other media, like the company website and follow button to further websites.
- Can create a LinkedIn follow button from the ABCFV website to the ABCFV LinkedIn page.

Twitter

ABCFV struggled to increase its presence on Twitter in the first half of 2022, in line with the

campaign strategy. Tweets by ABCFV received little engagement and responsiveness.

In the argument for continuing to use ABCFV Twitter, some benefits to a successful and engaging Twitter page include:

- Reaching new audiences
- Building relationships with figures in the broadcasting/ABC ecosystem.
- Staying up to date with the latest news and relevant events.
- Sharing organisational activities instantly

These generic benefits are positive in their own right but are less significant for ABCFV when considering general changes to the social media landscape.

- Reaching new audiences would be beneficial for ABCFV, particularly in the case of attracting Twitter users who may be otherwise unaware of ABCFV as they don't use other social media platforms.
- Beyond reaching new audiences, Twitter is a fantastic platform for building relationships with key public figures, a process likely to bring some benefit to ABCFV. These figures may include current or former ABC employees, politicians or people of common public interest. Twitter allows for easy yet meaningful discussion with these people, bringing relevance to ABCFV.
- However, using Twitter account to keep followers up to date with the latest news and events is less relevant for ABCFV. Facebook and Instagram continue to expand their relevance in this space, so it is unlikely ABCFV would use Twitter for this purpose.

For Twitter to be a successful platform for ABCFV, the focus must include but not restricted to posting and resharing of ABCFV content from other social media channels. Outside of this typical Twitter activity, time should be given to engaging with public figures active on Twitter and engaging with Twitter threads that relate to the topic of the ABC. This attention will give ABCFV a more active presence on Twitter, which appears necessary to hold relevance on this platform.

Paid Advertising

Paid advertising was an effective tool used on Instagram and Facebook. ABC Friends Victoria ran eight advertisements on Facebook and Instagram during the campaign period. The advertisements ran for a week at a time, costing around \$5 a day, making a positive impact on engagement and followership on Facebook and Instagram. The advertisements were also beneficial in expanding and targeting social media users outside existing ABCFV followers. Paid advertisements will continue to be a relatively cost friendly yet effective tool for boosting engagement on Facebook and Instagram in a relatively short period of time.

Conclusion

This evaluation should provide a solid overview of the implementation and evaluation of the ABCFV social media strategy for the 2022 federal campaign. The analytical insights drawn from each of the social media platforms also forms as a clear starting point for comparison with future election campaigns.