

**FABC Covering letter and Questionnaire sent to Candidates 2004 Election
by Vic, Tas & Qld FABC**

1 September 2004

Dear

**Re: FABC Questionnaire on the ABC
to be returned by Friday 10th September 2004**

I write on behalf of Friends of the ABC. FABC is the major body representing the community's interest in its national public broadcaster. Increased concern about the ABC's future as an independent and comprehensive broadcaster has resulted in FABC becoming a large body with an active and growing membership. It is comprised of many thousands of members and groups in every Australian state and territory which operate together in national campaigns.

The maintenance of a well-funded, innovative, independent and comprehensive national public broadcaster is of fundamental importance to Australian democracy and culture.

The present Coalition Government's cut to the national broadcaster's triennial funding, along with a decline in ABC funding under both Coalition and Labor governments since 1985/86, and the closure and subsequent sale of the Cox Peninsula shortwave transmitter system to a foreign religious broadcaster, had a significant impact on both the extent and the nature of the ABC's services.

Awareness is growing amongst city and country Australians alike that the ABC's independence – from both political and commercial influence – and its future as a comprehensive national broadcaster for all Australians is under threat.

Insufficient funding has resulted in cuts in ABC services and serious loss in the quality and innovation of ABC programming. Radio Australia's development of positive relations with the peoples of other countries is important to foreign policy, trade and defence. It is a tragedy for our neighbours who depend upon RA, and politically and economically shortsighted, that Australia's highly regarded international broadcaster has been downgraded.

The public is entitled to be informed of the actions that candidates seeking to represent them in parliament will take if elected. FABC is seeking from candidates clear, unequivocal commitments on the ABC. It will inform the Australian public of measures you/your party are committed to take (or fail to commit yourself to take) if elected at the forthcoming federal election. We are also interested to hear of any action you have or will take in your party to support the ABC.

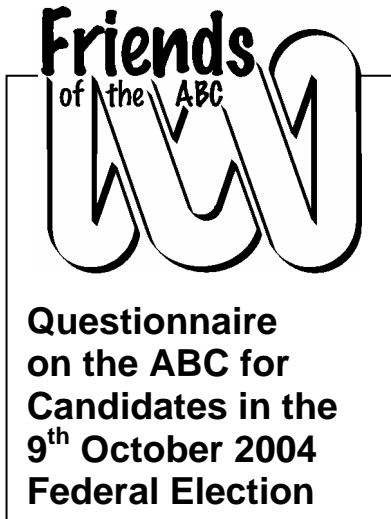
The government has set a tight timeline for the federal election. To assist FABC in representing your position on the ABC to voters, we request you complete and return the enclosed questionnaire to FABC at GPO Box 4065, Melbourne 3001 as soon as possible, but at the latest **by Friday 10th September 2004.**

Yours sincerely

XXXXXXXXX
President

Enc: . FABC Questionnaire to Candidates for the Federal Election
. FABC Proposed Policy on the ABC for Political Parties

GS:election 2004



Electorate:

Candidate's Name:

State/Territory: Party
endorsement:

Party which presently holds seat:

Please return the completed Questionnaire by no later than Friday 10th September 2004 to FABC Vic, GPO Box 4065, Melbourne 3001.

Important:

⇒ Please read the accompanying letter and *FABC's Proposed Policy for Political Parties* before commencing this questionnaire.

⇒ In the questionnaire two benchmarks are used for the ABC's level of operation - 1985/86 and 1995/96. ABC operational funds have fallen since 1985/86 under both Coalition and Labor Governments that failed to maintain the national broadcaster's funding in real terms. The Coalition Government cut the level of ABC triennial funding shortly after its election to office in 1996, and closed and then sold the Cox Peninsula shortwave transmitter system.

FABC seeks at least:

- the restoration of ABC funding to its 1985/86 level of operational funds in real terms, with that funding to be in the form of triennial funding which is maintained in real terms;
- additional funds required for the national broadcaster to participate fully and to be at the forefront in a technologically changing media environment;
- the commercial and political independence of the ABC, including the introduction of a system to ensure appointments are made to the ABC Board on merit ; and
- the restoration of Radio Australia's services, including its shortwave transmission;

⇒ When answering questions, please place a **tick** in the appropriate boxes and provide all information requested.

Where any answer you give is the policy or is a rule of the political party which has endorsed your candidature, in addition to placing a tick in the "Yes" or "No" box, please also place a **tick** in the box relating to "party policy".

Please print your written answers clearly.

⇒ FABC will assume that if you give no answer to any particular question that you do not wish to make a commitment on this matter.

⇒ FABC welcomes any comments you may care to make about the ABC, matters raised in this questionnaire, or action you have taken or plan to take in your own party on these matters. Please attach a further page if we have not provided adequate space for your comments.

⇒ Any queries: contact FABC Vic Campaign Manager, Glenys Stradijot phone (03) 9682 0073 over *

A. IMPLEMENTATION OF YOUR COMMITMENTS

If the party to which you belong is elected to government or members of your party hold the balance of power in the Senate, **how** will you ensure the policies you express in this questionnaire are implemented and adhered to by your party’s parliamentary representatives during the forthcoming electoral term?

.....
.....

B. POLICY ON THE ABC

Questions 1 and 2 relate to a support role for government because the ABC is an independent statutory authority.

If you and your party are elected to government, or hold the balance of power in the Senate, will you:

- 1. ensure the ABC is fully funded and supported by the Federal Government to **fulfil to a high standard its role as an an independent and comprehensive national public broadcaster -**
 - . contributing to and reflecting the cultural and intellectual diversity of interests in Australia;
 - . producing in-house all news and current affairs, except current affairs produced by other independent public broadcasters;
 - . restoring specialist program units;
 - . restoring and maintaining at least the 1995/96 level of non news and current affairs in-house production (i.e., more than 75%) for television;
 - . supporting the ABC to retain production and studio facilities to enable it to continue to produce and co-produce programs across each of its current programming strands;
 - . maintaining at least 1995/96 levels of in-house production across all networks and program streams; and
 - . maintaining present ABC services and networks: national and state television; metropolitan and regional radio; national radio networks - Radio National, Classic FM, NewsRadio and Triple J; ABC Online; Radio Australia and ABC Asia Pacific?

Yes No

Please tick if your answer is party policy

- 2. support the ABC to broadcast at a **national, state and local regional** level by
 - . producing and broadcasting programs of national significance;
 - . producing and broadcasting in each state and territory programs which reflect state diversity and programs which reflect local regional diversity;
 - . producing and broadcasting daily in each state and territory a proportion of prime-time television news and current affairs programs which deal with state and local regional issues; and
 - . retaining television and radio studios and production facilities in each of the State and Territory capital cities?

Yes No

Please tick if your answer is party policy

If you and your party are elected to government, or hold the balance of power in the Senate, will you:

3. uphold the **independence** of the ABC – from commercial and government influence over ABC programming, editorial and management decisions – by

3.1 opposing any attempt to introduce advertising or sponsorship on the ABC?

Yes No

Please tick if your answer is party policy

3.2 amending the ABC Act to extend the prohibition of advertising and sponsorship on radio and television to all functions of the ABC (being the services the ABC exists to provide), and prohibit commercial activities which risk the ABC's editorial independence?

Yes No

Please tick if your answer is party policy

3.3 ensuring the independence and integrity of the ABC Board by introducing a new system of appointments to the Board which is transparent and ensures members are appointed on the basis of merit and strong commitment to the maintenance of an independent and comprehensive national public broadcaster, and the board is independent of political parties and the government of the day?

Yes No

Please tick if your answer is party policy

*** Please attach full detail on the system you would introduce.**

3.4 maintaining the position of staff-elected director on the ABC Board?

Yes No

Please tick if your answer is party policy

3.5 not interfering in programming, editorial and management matters of the ABC?

Yes No

Please tick if your answer is party policy

4. legislate to require the ABC **Board to operate with greater public transparency** with regard to policy matters?

Yes No

Please tick if your answer is party policy

*** Please attach an outline of the types of matters for which you would require greater transparency and the manner in which you would require transparency to be achieved**

5. promise not to change the **ABC's Charter** or Act in any way which may diminish or weaken the role of the ABC, or increase the potential for government or commercial interference in the ABC?

Yes No

Please tick if your answer is party policy

6. legislate to ensure **full and free access** to all ABC services (being services the ABC exists to provide) without individual cost?

Yes No

Please tick if your answer is party policy

over *

7. legislate to ensure ABC services have full access to the **digital and multi media services environment and present and future transmission mediums?**

Yes No

Please tick if your answer is party policy

8. ensure **Radio Australia** has access to transmission facilities, including shortwave, which enable it to independently broadcast its full range of programs to at least its reach and extent prior to the closure of the Cox Peninsula transmission system.

Yes No

Please tick if your answer is party policy

9. **adequately fund** the ABC and fund it in a manner which **upholds its independence** by -

9.1 introducing a mechanism which guarantees the ABC is well-funded:

*** Please attach full details of any new funding mechanism/formula you will introduce, and any indexation system you will introduce to maintain ABC funding in real terms.**

9.2 increasing the ABC's base triennial funding to at least the ABC's 1985/86 level of operational funds in real terms?

What level of base triennial funding will you provide and by which financial year?

..... % of 1985-86 operational funds in real terms by the financial year

\$ per annum by the financial year

9.3 providing, in addition to base triennial funding, full funds required for the national broadcaster to undertake technological change required for it to be at the forefront in a technologically changing media environment?

Yes No

Please tick if your answers to question 9. are party policy

10. increase transmission funds and facilities to provide full **access for regional and rural Australians to all national ABC networks?**

Yes No

Please tick if your answer is party policy

11. make any change to the process or mechanisms by which **formal complaints** can presently be made against the ABC?

Yes No

Please tick if your answer is party policy

*** Please attach full details of any changes you plan to make.**

Signed: Date:

Candidate for:

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Remember to include any relevant attachments.

