

ABC Friends

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

**Welcome to the Southern Highlands Branch
ABC Friends Newsletter: February 2022**

To all our members and prospective members,

Your Southern Highlands branch, ABC Friends, committee has made a strong start in its first year, (even with the uncertainties, restrictions and lockdowns of COVID).

Below in our first newsletter to the members of the *Southern Highlands Branch of ABC Friends* is a summary of our progress, since the inception of our branch just over a year ago.

In addition to this, we are inviting you to the **ABC's 90th Birthday** celebrations here in the Southern Highlands, on **Saturday, 2nd July, 2022.**

2020 Activities and Planning by your committee

The committee of *the ABC Friends Southern Highlands Branch* held our first event, an ABC information and merchandise stall, at Springett's Arcade, Bowral just in time for Christmas. Local residents and visitors stopped to chat about their children's favourite viewing choices such as *Bluey* and their own much loved programs such as *Landline*. Young people stopped to pick up *triple j* merchandise. It became clear that most people who spoke to us, were very appreciative of the *ABC Emergency Services* and dedicated local radio stations which had provided minute by minute updates on local fires, weather conditions and evacuation warnings during the *Black Summer* emergencies.



Southern Highlands prime farming land

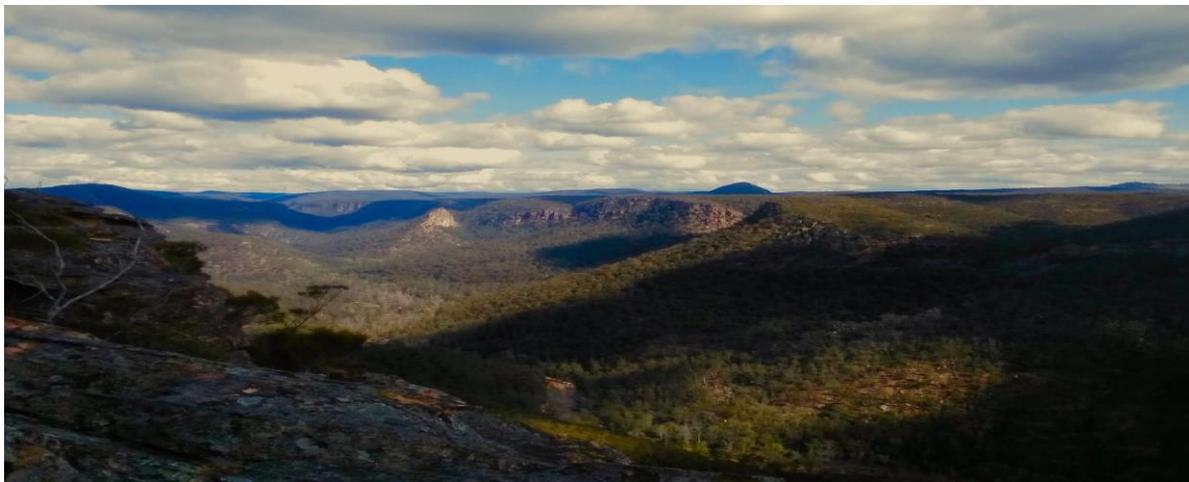
2021

April:

Our first local market stall was at the Exeter Market, on a clear and sunny autumn Saturday. Apart from the opportunity to buy ABC merchandise, the stall included a very popular *Easter Raffle* which offered visitors the chance to win a number of prizes, generously donated by one of our committee members. The market drew many visitors from across the Southern Highlands and beyond and the possibility of winning the large basket of Easter goodies put a smile on the faces of adults and children alike. Once again, many people stopped to chat about growing up with the ABC and their old and current favourite ABC viewing and listening choices.

More than 100 visitors took the opportunity to sign a petition which asked for “*Assured, adequate, indexed funding of the ABC, as a strong, trusted and independent public broadcaster*”

The next day the petition signatures were sent to be included in the **Save the ABC** petition to Parliament, which is supported by Stephen Jones, the Member for Whitlam, the federal electoral division, which includes much of the Southern Highlands.



Views from High Range

The committee began planning a Southern Highlands celebration of the **ABC’s 90th Birthday**. We are currently in the process of inviting guest speakers for a public celebration of the ABC’s extraordinary birthday to be held on:

- **Saturday, July 2nd, 2 pm - 4 pm at Bowral Public School**
- **Be sure to keep this date free to come and join the celebrations**

August:

4 Corners turned 60! (First broadcast: 19/8/1961)

The committee began our meeting by reminiscing about the historical events that *4 Corners* had covered, using the “new” medium of TV.

Plans for more ABC stalls at local markets were curtailed by COVID restrictions.

We initiated discussions about how to gauge and make public the views of all our electoral candidates regarding the ABC’s future and funding, before the coming Federal elections.

October:

We agreed that, to assess levels of support, for our public broadcaster, from political candidates, who intend to stand for the coming Federal election representing their constituents in the seats of Whitlam and Hume, we would canvass each candidate about future funding of the ABC. We agreed that our questions would need to be clear, in ascertaining candidates’ support of a robust and independent public broadcaster, our ABC.

December:

The committee undertook planning and completion of a *Southern Highlands Branch of ABC Friends* Webpage. We hope that you will visit our website to keep in touch with your branch of *ABC FRIENDS*. Use the url below or the QR code to access directly

https://www.abcfriends.net.au/southern_highlands_branch



2022

A Street Stall will be in Corbett Plaza, Bowral, on Monday, February 28th, 11am to 1 pm.

We hope to chat with you and with other locals about our *ABC Friends Southern Highlands Branch* and about the 90 years during which the ABC has provided programs; for schools, created local content in drama, investigative journalism and has championed Australians across all areas of the creative arts. **ABC Friends** merchandise will be available too.

In preparation for the upcoming federal election, plans have been initiated for a widespread local letterbox information drop, outlining local candidates' responses to questions regarding:

*The ABC Charter, Funding and support for an independent public broadcaster, which will:
... provide scrutiny and accountability of our elected representatives, without partisan or political influence, without cuts to funding of the ABC, without measures to constrain the ABC's independence and without the threat to privatise the ABC...*

Simultaneously, ABC Friends NSW&ACT has made the decision to formulate a generic questionnaire to guarantee consistency across all branches.

This questionnaire will be on our website for you to read as soon as it is finalised.

Locals who spoke to us whilst visiting our stalls, generally spoke of a trust of the ABC by the public, especially after the bushfires of 2020 and their personal experiences of using the ABC Emergency Broadcast Service.

'Access to the ABC made me feel safer, during the fires'

'I love local ABC radio it keeps me in touch with what's going on in the area'

Our stalls had posters of some of the ABC Children's programs and young visitors proved to be enthusiastic and loyal fans of programs such as *Little Lunch*, *Bluey* and *Play School*. Young adults too, spoke of their appreciation of the Australian content aired by *triple j* and of TV programs such as *The Set*.



Old Hume Highway near Berrima Southern Highlands

By informing voters about candidates' responses to the questions posed by ABC Friends NSW & ACT, we expect to provide Southern Highlands voters with information about each candidate's level of support for our ABC, as a strong and independent, public broadcaster.

We plan to share responses from all the political candidates for Hume and Whitlam, on our website, through emails, letterbox drops prior to the election and through leaflet distribution to voters on election day.

Our local community deserves a strong, properly funded national broadcaster, a trusted source of vital information for the city, the bush, all regions and all voices. A broadcaster, which has an indexation of funding, a public broadcaster that is engaged in education, fearless reporting, serious analysis and discussion of science, the arts, news, international events, sport, law, education, history, etc.

For further information about current issues faced by the ABC you may like to have a look at the following links:

https://www.abcfriends.net.au/the_abc_and_the_election_video
https://www.abcfriends.net.au/update_magazine_december_2021
https://cdn.getup.org.au/2871-_Insidious_and_intentional-_political_interference_and_harassment_of_the_ABC.pdf

As an ABC Friend, if you would like to assist in distributing information about which candidates pledge to support an independent and accountable ABC please email:
southernhighlands@abcfriends.net.au