



THE CASHLESS DEBIT CARD – A ‘PUBLIC WHIP’

What is a cashless ‘welfare’ card? The cashless card, known colloquially as the ‘white card’, was a top-down policy developed by mining businessman Andrew Forrest as part of his 2014 review of Indigenous jobs and training. The Australian government commenced cashless debit card trials in Kununurra/Wyndham WA and Ceduna SA in early 2016.

The cashless welfare card program now applies to people who receive a working age welfare payment and is currently in operation in the Ceduna region, South Australia, the East Kimberley and the Goldfields regions, Western Australia, the Cape York, Doomadgee, Bundaberg and Hervey Bay regions, Queensland, and in the Northern Territory.

There is growing concern that the Morrison government, if it wins the next election, will extend this card to all pensioners. We raise this issue because, while the Morrison government publicly rejects the idea that they will extend the cashless credit card to all pension recipients, Minister for Social Services Ann Ruston has been quoted in the media as saying that she wants the cashless debit card to become a ‘more universal platform’, as reported by *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 February 2020.

It is worth noting that John Howard, when he was re-elected leader of the Liberal Party in 1995, pledged to ‘never, ever’ introduce a GST; however, he led the Liberal-National Coalition to a large victory in the 1996 federal election and introduced a GST in 1999.

Investigations show that the administration of the cashless ‘welfare’ card currently in use was farmed out to a private company called Indue Ltd and costs \$10,000 per person on the card and is costing taxpayers \$18.9 million over its two-year period.

While this in itself is disgraceful, it should be noted that what is even more disgraceful is that the card’s extension after its initial trial was rejected by 37 major welfare organisations as being ‘unacceptable and discriminatory’. The St Vincent de Paul Society said it does not support the cashless debit card (September 2016):

There is no evidence that it improves the wellbeing of individuals or communities, either by reducing substance abuse or by increasing employment

outcomes. The cashless debit card carries a high risk of unintended and expensive consequences for government and the community, including social exclusion and stigmatisation, increased financial hardship, the erosion of individual autonomy and dignity and an increase in the overall cost of social security provision.

Indeed, 37 major welfare organisations opposed this process.

Following the release of the Forrest Review, ACOSS and more than 30 community organisations, including many leading national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, urged the government not to proceed with the implementation of this recommendation. Yet those calls have fallen on deaf ears.

The welfare card, modelled on the Basics Card, is used to manage the income of people in disadvantaged communities and locations around Australia. This scheme of income management has failed to effect long-term changes in behaviour or outcomes, despite the high cost of the policy. Its introduction was supposed to run alongside new health, education, and housing services, but of course this did not occur.

Senator Pat Dodson has described the cashless welfare card as a ‘public whip’ designed to control Indigenous people and said the federal government should focus on holistic solutions to problems of alcohol, drug addiction and violence in remote communities.

Associate Professor Ruth Phillips, social policy expert from University of Sydney, argues the program should be scrapped altogether. She claims: ‘it is anti-welfare, punitive, costly and ineffective’ (University of Sydney, 14 December 2020).

This government, and indeed most politicians generally, are totally isolated from community needs, blanketed as they are in the Canberra bubble, on incomes most can only imagine. If the coronavirus pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we cannot rely on elected representatives to resolve our crisis, but community coming together to demand a new deal will change our world. 🕯

FREEDOM IS NOT FREE

(THAT'S WHY YOU DON'T HAVE ANY)

'Freedom is not free', goes the old bumper sticker slogan, commonly accompanied by an image of a flag or soldiers or some other bullshit.

Freedom is not free, the saying goes, because military personnel are out there laying their lives on the line fighting for your right to do as you're told and toil away at a meaningless job making some rich asshole even richer.

Freedom is not free, because we're all just so much freer after murdering families on the other side of the planet for corporate profits and geo-strategic domination.

Freedom is not free, because we're all so much freer after teenagers get thrown into the gears of the imperial war machine to provide a good quarterly statement for Raytheon shareholders.

Freedom is not free, because this thing we're calling 'freedom' has been paid for with the blood, lives and limbs of millions of innocents throughout the Global South.

Freedom is not free. That's why the only people doing as they please in our world are wealthy oligarchs.

Freedom is not free. And unless you're wealthy enough or psychopathic enough there's no way you'll ever find a way to pay the price.

Freedom is not free. That's why you don't have any.

Freedom is not free. That's why we're all running along on this ridiculous hamster wheel of global capitalism destroying our ecosystem so some dickhead with too much money can go float around in space.

Freedom is not free. It takes billions of dollars worth of mass media propaganda to manufacture the illusion of freedom.

Freedom is not free. Great expense went into creating the Truman Show narrative matrix that we are all caged in.

Freedom is not free. That's why your votes are fake and your political system is a scripted puppet show for children.

Freedom is not free. That's why you must obey your rulers to avoid getting censored by Silicon Valley oligarchs, assaulted by police officers, or thrown in prison by bureaucrats who play with civilizations like toys.

Freedom is not free, and we can't afford the admission fee to actually influence the direction our world is headed.

Freedom is not free, and we're watching helplessly as plutocrats and warmongers drive our beautiful world off a cliff from which there is no returning.

Freedom is not free, and we are marching doomward to the beat of Hollywood and lying newscasters.

Freedom is not free, and we are too enslaved to our own egoic conditioning and trauma-induced mental habits to see the path to true liberation.

Freedom is not free. It's going to take a lot for us to turn inward and awaken to our true potential so that we can break free of our propaganda brainboxes and become a conscious species.

Freedom is not free. But it is waiting for us, beneath the thoughts, beneath the noise, beneath the believed narratives about self, world and other.

Freedom is not free. Or hey, plot twist: maybe it is. Maybe freedom is our true nature, and all we need to do is recognize it.

Freedom is free. And freedom is you and me. And humanity awakening to this reality is what will someday rid us of our chains.

Not too long now. Not long at all.

Source: Caitlinjohnstone.com

US politicising COVID pandemic to incriminate China is self-defeating



The United States is losing the ability for rational political debate and respect for science. Politicians, media and public discourse have been infected by lies, conspiracies, racial stereotyping of nations like China, and rampant hostility.

31 July 2021 – The World Health Organization seems to have succumbed to US pressure to falsely incriminate China over the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The United Nations affiliated body has called for a Phase Two study of laboratories and markets in the Chinese city of Wuhan where early COVID-19 cases were detected in December 2019. Beijing has rebuffed the call, saying that the proposed investigation is a cover for politicising the pandemic along the lines pushed by Washington.

What has happened at the WHO? An earlier survey by WHO and Chinese scientists published in February this year concluded it was 'extremely unlikely' that the novel coronavirus escaped from the Wuhan Institute of Virology. But now the WHO is recommending a follow-up study as if casting doubt on its previous findings. Beijing says this is an undue sole focus on China.

Two factors seem relevant here. Under President Joe Biden's administration, the United States has rejoined membership of the WHO. His predecessor Donald Trump had pulled the US out of the international

body, claiming that it was too close to China and was concealing the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic. The United States is the main source of funding for the WHO, so its return will be a welcome move and no doubt has influenced the executive to be more favourable to American claims about the pandemic.

Biden and the US media have remarkably revived the baseless conspiracy theory instigated by Trump and his right-wing Republicans that China was the origin of COVID-19 through a 'leak' of the virus from the Wuhan Institute. Biden has tasked US intelligence agencies to report back in the coming weeks. It's not hard to imagine how the intelligence will be made to fit the political agenda of smearing China.

Beijing says, with fair reason, that the Americans are putting politics above science in order to undermine China in the greater scheme of geopolitical rivalry. The Chinese are calling for an international and cooperative investigation to objectively determine the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic which has resulted in over four million deaths worldwide over the past year.

Washington is coming from the premise that the disease is China's fault, and so it is pushing the focus of investigation entirely on China and locations in Wuhan. This prejudice is unscientific and seems geared to consolidate the conspiracy theory that the Wuhan laboratory was the source of the pandemic through a release of the virus.



**THE UNILATERAL DEMANDS
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INCRIMINATE CHINA.**

The political atmosphere in the US has become extremely toxic. Last week during Senate hearings, the top American expert on infectious diseases Anthony Fauci was assailed by reckless accusations that he was complicit in the alleged Wuhan 'lab leak' and responsible for all deaths.

The United States is losing the ability for rational political debate and respect for science. Politicians, media and public discourse have been infected by lies, conspiracies, racial stereotyping of nations like China (Russia, Iran and others), and rampant hostility. America's much-vaunted democracy is a scrap heap of seething enmity which blocks any reasonable solutions to its many domestic social challenges as well as the conduct of civil international relations.

Obscene social inequality, lack of political leadership and lack of public trust in governance have resulted in the most shameful record. The US death toll from the pandemic is over 620,000 – way above any other nation. That is an indictment of the failure of 'American democracy' and its capitalist-oligarchic society.

Yet the Americans keep pushing the conspiracy that it's all China's fault. That country with nearly four times the US population has incurred a tiny fraction (less than 1 per cent) of the American death toll from COVID-19. That success is down to good centrally planned governance of China's socialist system and national unity of purpose to contain the disease. Chinese people don't question basic science such as efficacy of wearing face masks in public spaces or

availing of vaccines. By contrast, American society is riven and racked by ignorance, selfishness and loony irrationality about so-called 'freedoms'.

A productive, genuinely international effort to locate the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic would be open to all leads for inquiry.

The unilateral demands by Washington to limit the investigation to the facilities in Wuhan are based on conspiratorial thinking and motivated by an effort to incriminate China.

Admittedly, the first reported cases of COVID-19 were detected in Wuhan in December 2019. But that does not necessarily mean the pandemic originated there. There are reports of the disease emerging weeks before that date in North America and Europe. But these cases were either misdiagnosed or under-reported. During 2019 there was a surge in seasonal influenza deaths in the United States. Perhaps some of these cases were not due to the normal flu virus but rather to COVID-19 which has similar symptoms.

China is calling for a wider investigation in which biomedical samples in the US and Europe are retrospectively analysed for possible infection with COVID-19.

Another major factor deserving international scrutiny is Fort Detrick, the US military biowarfare laboratory in Maryland. This facility is believed to experiment with lethal pathogens, including novel coronaviruses.

Fort Detrick has a notorious record for safety failures going back to the Cold War decades. In August 2019, the laboratory was forced to shut down for several months after it was discovered its waste disposal processes had been compromised by failure. It is still not clear what that failure was due to exactly or what pathogens may have escaped.

But think about that. Such a grave breakdown in one of the most toxic centres on the planet preceded by only a few months the global pandemic. To a rational mind, that fact merits an international investigation for a possible role in the origin of COVID-19. China's government and many other nations have called on the WHO to open a probe into Fort Detrick. But the Americans point-blank refuse.

American arrogance and provocative politicisation over the pandemic are endangering international relations and preventing an effective scientific approach towards eradicating a disease that has wrought so much misery on its own nation. The ultimate downfall from such hubris is the self-inflicted damage.

Finian Cunningham – Former editor and writer for major news media organisations. He has written extensively on international affairs, with articles published in several languages. 🇬🇧

WE ACKNOWLEDGE

Traditional owners of the Kulin Nation, past Warriors, Elders past and present.

OXFAM (Power, Profits and the Pandemic)

10th September 2020

BUSINESS AND COVID



 **400 MILLION JOBS** HAVE BEEN LOST DURING THE PANDEMIC



Yet 32 of the world's most profitable companies are expected to make **\$109 BILLION MORE IN 2020** than in previous years.

JEFF BEZOS COULD PAY EACH OF AMAZON'S 876,000 EMPLOYEES...

A \$105,000 BONUS

AND STILL BE AS WEALTHY AS HE WAS AT THE ONSET OF THE PANDEMIC



Invested over time, this bonus could result in **\$450,000 RETIREMENT SAVINGS** for each employee.

ON AVERAGE, COMPANIES' COVID-19 DONATIONS AMOUNTED TO...



0.5%

OF THEIR PROFITS FOR 2019

These same 32 super-profitable corporations distributed \$1.3 trillion to their mostly wealthy shareholders in the 4 years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic.

SINCE JANUARY, THEY'VE ALREADY PAID SHAREHOLDERS **\$195 BILLION, OR 94% OF THEIR PROFITS SO FAR THIS YEAR.**

A PANDEMIC PROFITS TAX COULD PAY FOR...



CORONAVIRUS TESTING NEEDS GLOBALLY



A COVID-19 VACCINE FOR EVERYONE ON THE PLANET



SUPPORT A 21ST CENTURY FRONTLINE PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE



CUTS TO THE ABC – WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today and pay my respects to their Elders past and present. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.

My name is Phil Corser and I'm speaking on behalf of ABC Friends Victoria. I would like to thank the Unitarian Church for inviting me here today. ABC Friends is a not-for-profit organisation consisting of volunteers who value the role of our national broadcast service and who are concerned about threats to the very existence of the ABC.

ABC Friends was established in the late 1970s. It was established in response to budget cuts proposed by the Fraser government. We are not associated directly with the ABC although we have received support from ABC alumni (such as John Faine and Kerry O'Brien and Quentin Dempster) and the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, and GetUp!. Our vision is that the federal government and the ABC provide substantial funding to enable the ABC to fulfil its charter without commercial sponsorship or advertising to produce programming of the highest quality for all Australia. We are calling on the government and the ABC to provide transparency in the public processes in the

appointment of the ABC Board and Chairperson and transparency in major decisions made by ABC management. And, thirdly, we call for respect for and protection of ABC independence and freedom from political influence. If these three conditions can be achieved, then the ABC can continue to promote Australian culture and social cohesion, which are specified in its charter.

WHY IS THE ABC IMPORTANT?

The ABC plays a significant role in our democracy in representing 'the people' in relation to the business and political elites who claim to be doing things in our name. The ABC is meant to be independent of political influence and free of commercial imperatives. It doesn't have to tow the line of the media owner (Murdoch press) or generate a profit. This gives the ABC the opportunity to report the news with impartiality and provide public interest investigative journalism.

In times of crisis the ABC provides emergency broadcasts. The ABC provided continual coverage of bushfires that literally saved lives. When all else fails (which can include phones and the internet), there is always ABC radio. During the bushfire period a year

ago, 120 ABC News staff went into the field to cover the events, many of them cutting short holidays so they could provide emergency broadcasts.

In 2017–2018, there were 256 emergency broadcasts during the fire season, 371 during the 2018/2019 season, and close to 1000 in the 2019/2020 season.

Numerous surveys have shown that the ABC is the most trusted source of information in Australia (this is also a product of its independence). It is owned and responsive to the taxpayers of Australia. A Roy Morgan national opinion survey conducted in 2019 found that 71% of adult Australians value the ABC's independence. Seventy-seven per cent say they can rely on the ABC for accurate information. Seventy-six per cent said funding for the ABC should be either maintained or increased.

It is also charged to provide educational content. Many parents appreciate that their children can watch appropriate programs without advertising. During the lockdown, the ABC provided educational programming to assist parents who were home schooling their children at this time.

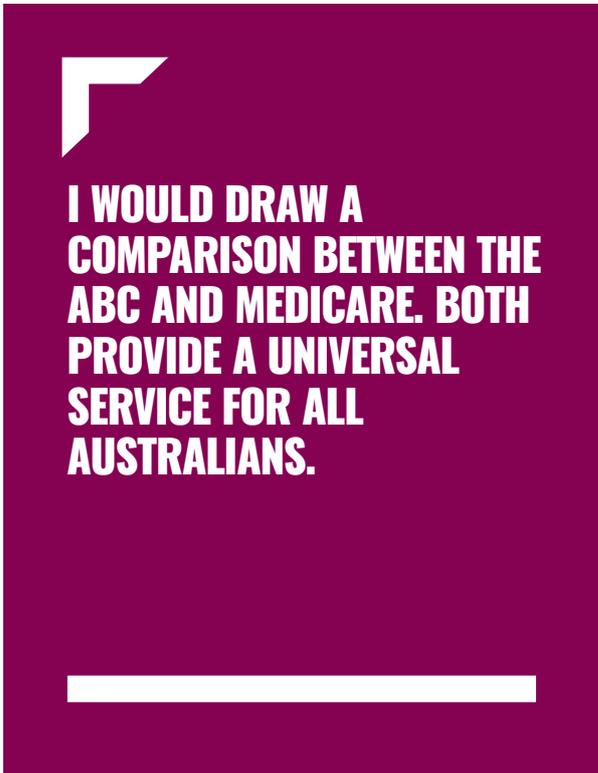
The ABC charter requires it to encourage and promote music, drama and performing arts in Australia. This sector has probably suffered the most because of restrictions to public gatherings. The ABC can play a vital role in the recovery of the arts and entertainment sector.

However, the ABC has been under attack from successive Liberal/National Party governments. In 2014, on the eve of the election, Tony Abbott notoriously promised that there would be no cuts to the ABC. When he came to office, he cut the ABC budget by \$254 million dollars. Since that time, the ABC budget has been cut by \$783 million dollars. Based on forward estimates in the October budget of 2020, the ABC will lose \$1.17 billion dollars by 2023. Therefore, 1,200 jobs have been lost.

'Death by a Thousand Cuts' (*The Guardian*, February 2021) reported that the ABC was experiencing death by a thousand cuts. Budget cuts have led to a reduction in what the ABC can provide. The 7.45 news bulletin on ABC breakfast radio has been axed. There has been closure and downsizing of ABC bureaus in Tokyo, Bangkok, New Delhi, Africa and New Zealand. There has been a 50% reduction in the number of hours of original scripted drama. ABC job losses now total 1200 since 2014, with 200 of those in 2020. *Lateline* and the state-based *7.30 Report* have been axed. *PM* and the *World Today* radio reports have been halved in duration.

POLITICAL INTERFERENCE

What drew me into joining ABC Friends Victoria were disturbing reports of attempted political interference into the ABC's independence. I was incensed by reports in 2018 that the chairperson at that time, Justin Milne, had sent emails to the managing director, Michelle Guthrie, to sack Andrew Probyn (ABC political reporter) and Emma Alberrici because he said the government hated them. Milne was widely condemned for trying to compromise the



**I WOULD DRAW A
COMPARISON BETWEEN THE
ABC AND MEDICARE. BOTH
PROVIDE A UNIVERSAL
SERVICE FOR ALL
AUSTRALIANS.**

independence of the ABC and subsequently resigned. This threat to frank and fearless reporting and the obvious attempt to nobble the ABC motivated me to join ABC Friends.

Most recently, Paul Fletcher (Minister for Communications) wrote a letter of complaint challenging whether the exposé of politicians' questionable behaviour outlined in the *Four Corners* story 'Inside the Canberra bubble', was in the public interest. He posted the letter of complaint on Twitter even before Ita Buttrose, the current chairperson, received the letter (very Trumpian). To her credit she called it out as attempted political interference. Subsequent revelations about the toxic masculine culture in the Australian parliament have proved to be of great interest and concern to the public.

Contrary to comments by Prime Minister Scott Morrison when he was treasurer, where he claimed he funds the ABC – it is funded by you, the taxpayers of Australia. The services provided by the ABC are part of our citizen dividend. This dividend includes free-to-air TV and radio and online digital services. It also includes emergency broadcasting in times of crisis such as bushfires, floods and most recently the COVID pandemic.

I would draw a comparison between the ABC and Medicare. Both provide a universal service for all Australians. The voters of Australia would not tolerate the privatisation of our healthcare system, nor should they allow the privatisation of the ABC. And yet, in 2018, the peak council of the Liberal Party voted overwhelmingly to privatise the ABC. I suspect the government hasn't got the guts to follow through with this sentiment. But we shouldn't allow any government to undermine the ABC through death by a thousand budget cuts. ABC Friends is desperate to alert the voting public to the ongoing threats to the ABC's existence. We want the future of the ABC to be high on the political agenda at the next budget and

the next election. We want every politician to know that the voting public is watching them and taking note of their attitude to the ABC.

One of the sustained attacks on the ABC by right-wing commentators, members of the government and some members of the public is that the ABC has a left-wing bias and a left-wing agenda. This claim is used as a slur against the ABC to discount and divert any criticism. It stifles any nuanced analysis or argument. In America, Trump used a similar device by labelling any news organisation that criticised or provided contrary opinion to his rule as fake news. The only valid news under the Trump illusion were media outlets that supported him and his political agenda, such as the Murdoch-owned 'Fox and Friends'. Here in Australia, Greg Hunt, the federal health minister, when asked by Michael Rowlands, an ABC journalist, whether it was appropriate to have a Liberal Party logo on a government announcement about an increase in vaccine supply, accused Rowlands of having a left-wing bias. Hunt didn't attempt to answer the question, he just attacked the integrity of the journalist and the ABC. Rather than answering legitimate questions, Liberal politicians seem to bat away the questions with accusations of bias and by ridiculing the journalist. Unfortunately, while ethically unsound, it seems to be an effective way to dodge accountability for some of the government's actions. You can fool all the people some of the time.

The critics of the ABC focus on its investigative journalism like *Four Corners* and forums for public discussion such as *Q+A*, which often expose the shortcomings of government and the misdemeanours of the rich and powerful. They ignore or overlook the educational and cultural content provided by the ABC. You don't see quality children's programs like *Play School*, *Behind the News* or *Bluey* on commercial TV. The ABC provided extensive programming featuring Indigenous culture throughout NAIDOC week. Despite budget cuts, the ABC still provides us with homegrown drama and content that reflects and promotes Australian culture. The ABC nurtures Australian talent. It gives vital exposure to emerging professionals with music, film, comedy, writing and the broader arts in general. However, the continued budget cuts mean we are losing opportunities to employ Australian talent telling Australian stories.

I would argue that there is more to the ABC than what is provided by government funding. ABC Friends is an example. Yes, we are avid consumers of ABC content;



**YES, WE ARE AVID
CONSUMERS OF ABC
CONTENT; WE ARE ALSO
PASSIONATE SUPPORTERS
OF WHAT THE ABC
REPRESENTS.**

we are also passionate supporters of what the ABC represents. It is free from commercial influence, and it strives to be free from party-political influence. It strives to be independent and pursue ethical journalism. It is a media resource that is trusted and at its heart cares for the people of Australia.

The ABC alumni is another example that there is more to the ABC than that provided by the government of the day. While they are no longer employed by the ABC, they are still passionate supporters and defenders of our independent national broadcaster. They too support a source of news, entertainment and culture that is responsive to Australian democracy and represents Australian culture.

It's not just about the ABC. Weakening the ABC is strengthening some segments of the commercial media. While there are ethical journalists in the commercial media, many of the commentators we hear are not bound by a charter that requires the recognised standards of ethical journalism. The ABC has been strongly criticised by Murdoch media outlets, the Institute of Public Affairs, and members of the Liberal Party. On Sky News there were 22 anti ABC attack segments in a fourteen-day period in

Our church is a public and usable asset with portable seating and excellent conference, meeting and function facilities. We welcome its use by those who support our motto 'Seek the Truth and Serve Humanity'. Interested individuals or groups can contact the church office – we would be delighted to speak to you. A donation is payable.

June this year, led by Andrew Bolt, Cory Bernardi and Chris Kenny. On 2 June of this year, Victorian Liberal powerbroker Michael Kroger called for the sacking of Ita Buttrose, the chairperson of the ABC Board.

A privatised or defunct ABC would further increase Murdoch's monopoly control of media in Australia. Kevin Rudd attracted half a million signatures on a petition calling for an inquiry into media diversity (or lack thereof) in Australia. He points out that News Corp, owned and controlled by Murdoch, owns 70% of the print media in Australia and close to 100% in Queensland. In an address to the National Press Club, Rudd said that the Murdoch press had strongly supported the Liberal/National Party in all 19 federal and state elections in recent history. He described it as a systematic protection racket. He describes a process of conflating editorial opinion with facts to drive a political agenda – an agenda that includes lower taxes for the wealthy, minimum regulation, and denial of man-made climate change. This is also an agenda promulgated by the IPA which, like the Liberal/National Party, receives financial support from the mining industry.

In the USA, Fox News was a key supporter of Donald Trump and provided a platform for his appeals to the radical far right in America, which culminated in the attack on the Capitol building after his election defeat. The Lincoln Project, a group of republicans opposed to Trump, described Rupert Murdoch as the most dangerous immigrant ever to come to America.

In the commercial media, the principles of accurate and impartial journalism can be subverted by commercial concerns and interests. I can relate two recent examples. In testimony to the Science Environment and Communications Reference Committee in March of this year, Anthony Klan, a journalist with the Murdoch-owned *The Australian* newspaper, recounted his experience. He had written a story based on findings from the royal commission into the banks. His story revealed that Westpac had gouged \$8 billion in fees from its BT super fund. As the date for publication approached, he was summoned to a conference call with his editors and Westpac executives. The story was cancelled it seems because of economic and personal relationships between *The Australian* and its editors and Westpac.

More recently, *Media Watch* reported on the coverage of a story about Harvey Norman who kept \$22 million dollars provided by JobKeeper, while recording record profits. Initially, News Corp wire service (a Murdoch news service) carried this story: 'Angry workers have rallied outside Harvey Norman stores to protest the retailer purportedly opposing a minimum wage increase as it holds onto the "JobKeeper" benefit despite soaring profits'. Paul Barrie reported that 12 of

the 16 NewsCorp outlets scrubbed the story from their news sites. Harvey Norman is the biggest spender of advertising in Australia with \$340 million annually. He had 163 full-page advertisements in News Corp newspapers in the week of the union protest.

The ABC is a bulwark against media interests that are motivated by commercial imperatives, or a desire to exert political influence and those who seek attention by promoting misinformation and aberrant conspiracy theories.

WHAT ARE ABC FRIENDS DOING?

We are a not-for-profit volunteer organisation with approximately 4,500 members in Victoria and 10,000 nationwide. In Victoria, we have a committee of management and numerous sub-branches around the state. We are a grass roots organisation.

We have lobbied politicians on all sides of the political spectrum on behalf of the ABC with phone calls and a letter-writing campaign.

Prior to COVID, we held stalls and collected signatures on petitions calling on government to reverse its budget cuts. For instance, my sub-group in the inner west attended the Williamstown Festival of Literature and the Footscray Festival of Colour (I was stoked when Andy Griffiths signed our petition).

We have hosted two La Trobe University students who completed a placement by designing and implementing an online survey and conducting focus groups to find out what younger people thought about the ABC. Their report is helping us hone a more effective social media campaign. We have employed a youth engagement officer to further our connections with the younger demographic.

Banners have been displayed on the outside of Trades Hall in Melbourne and banners and corflutes have been displayed on freeway overpasses and private homes. We ran a marginal seats campaign at the last federal election with members attending voting booths and presenting leaflets to voters.

We hope to double our membership in order to finance a campaign for the next federal election and place the ABC high on the political agenda. We intend to keep establishing sub-branches wherever there is interest.

I encourage you all to think about a media landscape without the ABC. To misquote the Superman voice-over: We want to fight for truth, justice and not the American way. I'm thinking that the 'truth decay' caused by Fox News is a perfect example of why we need the ABC. You can fight to retain the ABC by joining ABC Friends at abcfriendsvic.org.au or by making a donation to support the cause. 🙌

INCREASE OUR CIRCULATION:

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DID YOU KNOW?



<https://independentaustralia.net/politics/politics-display/morrisons-recession-australias-worst-since-records-have-been-kept,15335>

THE MORRISON RECESSION WAS NOT INEVITABLE

Turkey and Chile show that a recession was not inevitable through the COVID pandemic. Both experienced greater infection rates and loss of life than Australia did. So did Bulgaria and Romania, which, while not OECD members, are very highly developed countries that also averted recession. This is true of other countries lower on the development table as well.

It may therefore be argued that Australia's recession was not wholly caused by the pandemic, but by Coalition incompetence in failing to apply the right fixes in a timely manner.

The pandemic just made it worse.

Australia was heading for a recession anyway. Through the full financial year 2018–19, annual economic growth was a puny 1.68%. Inflation was 1.6% and population growth 1.65%. This was what economists call a per capita recession.

Australia's ranking on economic growth that year tumbled to a miserable 25th in the 37-member OECD.

WELL DONE TO THE BEACON READERS!

In response to our request for help in building on the number of *Beacon* subscribers, the readers below have responded generously with their support. Well done to all of them. Never before has the need for material based on our philosophy of 'Seek the Truth and Serve Humanity' been so great, and to increase the circulation of *Beacon* is an easy way to achieve this. Please, *Beacon* readers, keep up this campaign and send us new people who may enjoy our journal.

from our readers



DEAR FELLOW SEEKERS OF TRUTH TO SERVE HUMANITY

Thank you for the July special edition. It has honestly and openly addressed issues which have concerned and increasingly alarmed many conscientious Australians about the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine since the post-WW2 establishment of the state of Israel.

Lots of mixed emotions by involved and subsequent historians and lay people about this decision based on the surreal revelations of Nazi anti-Semitic atrocities in Europe.

Without trying to deconstruct all articles in the July *Beacon*, I want to thank former UTS colleague Caroline Graham for her article with apt reference to TS Eliot in 'Slouching towards Jerusalem: Australia as an Israeli apologist'.

We are now increasingly aware of the psychological revelations that abuse leads to more abuse, and so it goes on and on and on and back into wars led usually by men with lots of machismo and little insight or intelligence.

Please pass this message on to Caroline.

Yours sincerely

L Maciver, NSW

DEAR DONNA

Enclosed are the names of three people that could receive three free copies of the *Beacon*.

This program of sending 3 copies of the *Beacon* to recommended people seems a good initiative to widen its circulation, as quite a number of important issues are not reported in our daily papers e.g. the criminal bombardment of civilians and children in Palestine by the Israelis has not been reported as a war crime – which it obviously is.

Best wishes

C Whatmough, NSW

THE BEACON

Thanks, and keep up the great work.

Regards

R Kilpatrick, Vic

MELBOURNE UNITARIAN PEACE MEMORIAL CHURCH

'SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY'

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110 Grey Street, East Melbourne (opposite the Mercy Hospital)

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Did you know

Beacon Editorial Board

Peter Abrehart

Marion Harper

Donna Sensi

Julie Stafford

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