



PO BOX 180 NEW TOWN TAS 7009

MEDIA ALERT

BUSHBY and ABETZ LOSE THE PLOT

Community Theatre Penalised

Innocent Director Punished

The Old Nick Company is a Tasmanian community theatre society with a six decade history presenting diverse Australian and classic theatre works to its local community.

The Company feels it is being punished in its community aims as a result of comments in recent Senate Estimates hearings regarding ABC Local Radio and as a direct result of the fact that the Old Nick Company is staging the Tasmanian premiere of the musical *Keating!*

From Senate Estimates Hansard (Environment, Communications and the Arts). Senators David Bushby and Eric Abetz questioning Mr Mark Scott, Managing Director of the ABC:

Senator BUSHBY—Last Tuesday, 2 February, your presenter Tim Cox on his morning show on 936 ABC Hobart mentioned a play which was being put on by the current Andy Muirhead *Breakfast* show producer Craig Wellington. He is the producer of the play, called *Keating! The Musical*. It was promoted on the Tim Cox show. This play is being performed specifically as a fundraiser and it is also being performed at the Theatre Royal generally, but the play itself, as produced by Craig Wellington, is being performed specifically as a Julia Gillard fundraiser for state candidate Lisa Singh in the coming weeks, and state ALP candidate David O'Byrne is also holding a fundraiser around that play.

A confidential internal source at the ABC has confirmed to The Old Nick Company that an internal investigation has found the Senators' claims incorrect:

- No mention was made on the Tim Cox morning show on ABC Local Radio on Monday 2 February of any political party fundraiser associated with the musical *Keating!*
- No mention was made at any time on any program on ABC Local Radio in the days before and after that date of any political party fundraiser associated with the musical *Keating!*
- Nor was any mention made of the public season of the musical *Keating!* on the Tim Cox morning program or any program on ABC Local Radio in the same period

Graeme Paine, O.A.M., President of the Old Nick Company, issued the following statement:-

“ABC Local Radio has informed The Old Nick Company that the public season of “Keating! The Musical” will not be covered either in an interview or with a ‘Live at the Centre’ performance as is common for such a landmark theatre production. ABC television’s *Stateline* program has backed away from a story on the musical as well.

“Also incorrect was the description of Craig Wellington as the producer of the musical *Keating!* He is the director of the production and as such is engaged to undertake that role by the Old Nick Company which is itself the producer.



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“Worse – our confidential source tells us that Craig Wellington, who works a casual producer for ABC Local Radio on an ad-hoc basis, would be likely to be left ‘off the radar’ without notification and not engaged to work there again.”

“We feel we are being cut out of our own community by our local broadcaster. Here we have a landmark Australian show which is about entertainment more than politics, given its popular appeal for all ages across the country. The only state or territory it has not toured to is Tasmania, so it is an absolute coup for the Old Nick Company to secure the rights to be the first ever production since the famed Company B tours which missed Tasmania.” Mr Paine said.

“Instead of embracing that exciting arts and entertainment coup and promoting the story, we get shut down from alerting our audience out there in the community by the public broadcaster.”

Paine continued: “This show is an entertainment with many fictional elements set in the Federal sphere of the 1990’s. It has no bearing on current politics. It has been banned unfairly.”

ENDS: 641 words

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Longer extract from Hansard:

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Mr Scott—Let me understand this. This has not been raised with me previously. Are you saying, Senator, that there is a musical in town which at different times different groups are going to use as a fundraiser or a charity event?

Senator BUSHBY—That is part of it. David O’Byrne’s fundraiser is not so much the problem. It is also specifically being put on as part of a gala dinner for a Julia Gillard function, not at the venue where it is generally being performed but at a specifically different—

Mr Scott—I can come to that specifically. I would just say that we have broadcast *Keating! The Musical* live on ABC2.

Senator ABETZ—That is not the issue.

Mr Scott—All I am saying is that a promotion of a musical that has toured the country, is now in Hobart and is on air—

Senator ABETZ—An ALP fundraiser near you. That is the issue.

Mr Scott—Senator, let me come back on the detail, but I draw a distinction between the first one—

Senator BUSHBY—I can see the distinction between the first one where a candidate has booked that in.

Mr Scott—But if, in fact, fundamentally a musical is being shown in town that people are spinning fundraising activities off and there is an interview on ABC local radio discussing the musical that is being shown in town, then, prima facie, that would be a reasonable thing to do to promote the musical. I think the question would be: is it the promotion of a fundraiser or is it the promotion of the musical? Let me look at the record and come back to you.

**From Senate Estimates HANSARD, Monday, 8 February 2010
Senate ECA 41: ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS**