

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 24 August 2018 5:52 PM  
**To:** 'Neil Griffiths'  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Radio Birdman - comment request - themusic.com.au

Hi Neil,  
We had a change of heart on this one – in terms of commenting.  
Here is a statement from an ABC spokesman:

ABC STATEMENT

The ABC did opt to pass on the documentary. As a responsible public broadcaster, we don't acquire content that we do not have a need for. In this case, it didn't make sense to spend money on a 110-minute documentary that did not meet our criteria for either audience appeal or our quality standards. We regularly make such decisions in line with our budget and our priority of commissioning new and distinctive content for audiences.

Radio Birdman played an important role in Australia's music history and the development of our independent music scene. Credit to them for their high energy, uncompromising attitude and, as one prominent fan put it, "outlaw reputation". But there are so many significant Australian bands and only so much time in the day. Our slate for Ausmusic Month is already filled with programs celebrating Australian music and artists, including a new music show, live performances, drama series and documentaries about Australian artists past and present, plus our unrivalled commitment to emerging and established Australian musicians on triple j, Double J and triple j Unearthed. We will also offer new children's content aimed at inspiring Australia's next generations of musicians and music lovers.

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**From:** Neil Griffiths <neil@themusic.com.au>  
**Sent:** Monday, 13 August 2018 10:38 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>  
**Subject:** Re: Radio Birdman - comment request - themusic.com.au

Hi [REDACTED]

Hope you've had a great weekend.

Just wanted to see if ABC will be or has already responded to Anthony Albanese's letter calling for the broadcaster to purchase the Radio Birdman documentary?

Cheers,



Neil Griffiths - Editor/Podcast host

**The Music**  
+61 2 8302 5555  
129/111 Flinders St, Surry Hills, 2010  
<http://www.themusic.com.au>

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**From:** [redacted] <[\[redacted\]@abc.net.au](mailto:[redacted]@abc.net.au)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 17 July 2018 11:50 AM  
**To:** Neil Griffiths  
**Cc:** [redacted]  
**Subject:** FW: Radio Birdman - comment request - themusic.com.au

Hello Neil,

[redacted] passed on your email to me.

The ABC does not comment on programming decisions.

[redacted] might I note that the ABC provided ample feedback to the documentary makers. These types of decisions are made every day, for any multitude of reasons. Any suggestion that the ABC "snubbed" the documentary makers or that this was a decision by an "elite leadership", whatever that means, is bogus.

s 47F

Please let me know if you need anything else.

Go well,

P +61 2 8333 [redacted]  
M [redacted] 47F  
E [munro.peter@abc.net.au](mailto:munro.peter@abc.net.au)



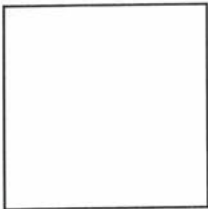
**From:** Neil Griffiths <[neil@themusic.com.au](mailto:neil@themusic.com.au)>  
**Sent:** Monday, 16 July 2018 9:20 AM  
**To:** [redacted] <[\[redacted\]@abc.net.au](mailto:[redacted]@abc.net.au)>  
**Subject:** Radio Birdman  
**Importance:** High

Hey [REDACTED]

Hope you had a great weekend!

Just wanted to see if ABC would like to comment on the decision not to screen Radio Birdman's documentary?

Cheers,



Neil Griffiths - Editor/Podcast host

[REDACTED]  
**The Music**  
+61 2 8302 5555  
129/111 Flinders St, Surry Hills, 2010  
<http://www.themusic.com.au>

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[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 22 August 2018 8:05 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: media query: Radio Birdman film  
**Attachments:** [REDACTED]

Hi [REDACTED]

Just to confirm, the doco is 110 minutes

The transcript that Jonathan attaches to the email is a somewhat manipulated representation of our conversation.

Ultimately our assessment was that the execution of the documentary was average and that the interviews, insights and archive would have very limited appeal beyond Radio Birdman fans.

The consensus was that it might be an option for OZ music month if we came up short on commissioned content and needed a buy-in. The thinking was that it would struggle to attract a sizable enough audience outside the context of OZ music month where the doco could potentially benefit from the marketing campaign and also a boost in awareness/audience via the association with other music content in the schedule commissioned for OZ music month.

However, this was only ever a marginal consideration due to it not being a particularly stand-out documentary and never fully interrogated as a viable option because it turned out that we ended up being stocked with suitable content for OZ music month.

Hope that helps but please don't hesitate to get in touch if you require further detail

Cheers  
[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 22 August 2018 5:07 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>  
**Subject:** FW: media query: Radio Birdman film

Hi [REDACTED]

Radio Birdman is back. I haven't discussed this media request with [REDACTED]. Up to now we have not commented on the decision.

Please see below. For my information, when did we tell them no. And was the doco ever considered for Ausmusic Month?

Cheers, [REDACTED]

**From:** David N Anderson  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 22 August 2018 5:03 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>; [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>  
**Subject:** FW: media query: Radio Birdman film

FYI



P +61 [redacted] E [redacted]@abc.net.au  
M +61 [redacted] A 700 Harris Street Ultimo 2007



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**From:** Amanda Meade [redacted]@abc.net.au  
**Date:** Wednesday, 22 August 2018 at 4:20 PM  
**To:** David Anderson [redacted]@abc.net.au  
**Subject:** media query: Radio Birdman film

Dear David,

ABC TV execs Katrina Ray and Dallas Krueger have told Jonathan Sequeira, producer of the doco *Descent into the Maelstrom – The Radio Birdman Story*, that the film has been rejected for ABC TV.

It was originally considered for Australian Music Month but no other slot has been found.

Anthony Albanese has been campaigning for the ABC to buy the film, and has written to you about it and has spoken in parliament. What have you said to him?

<https://twitter.com/AlboMP/status/1029917211509444608>

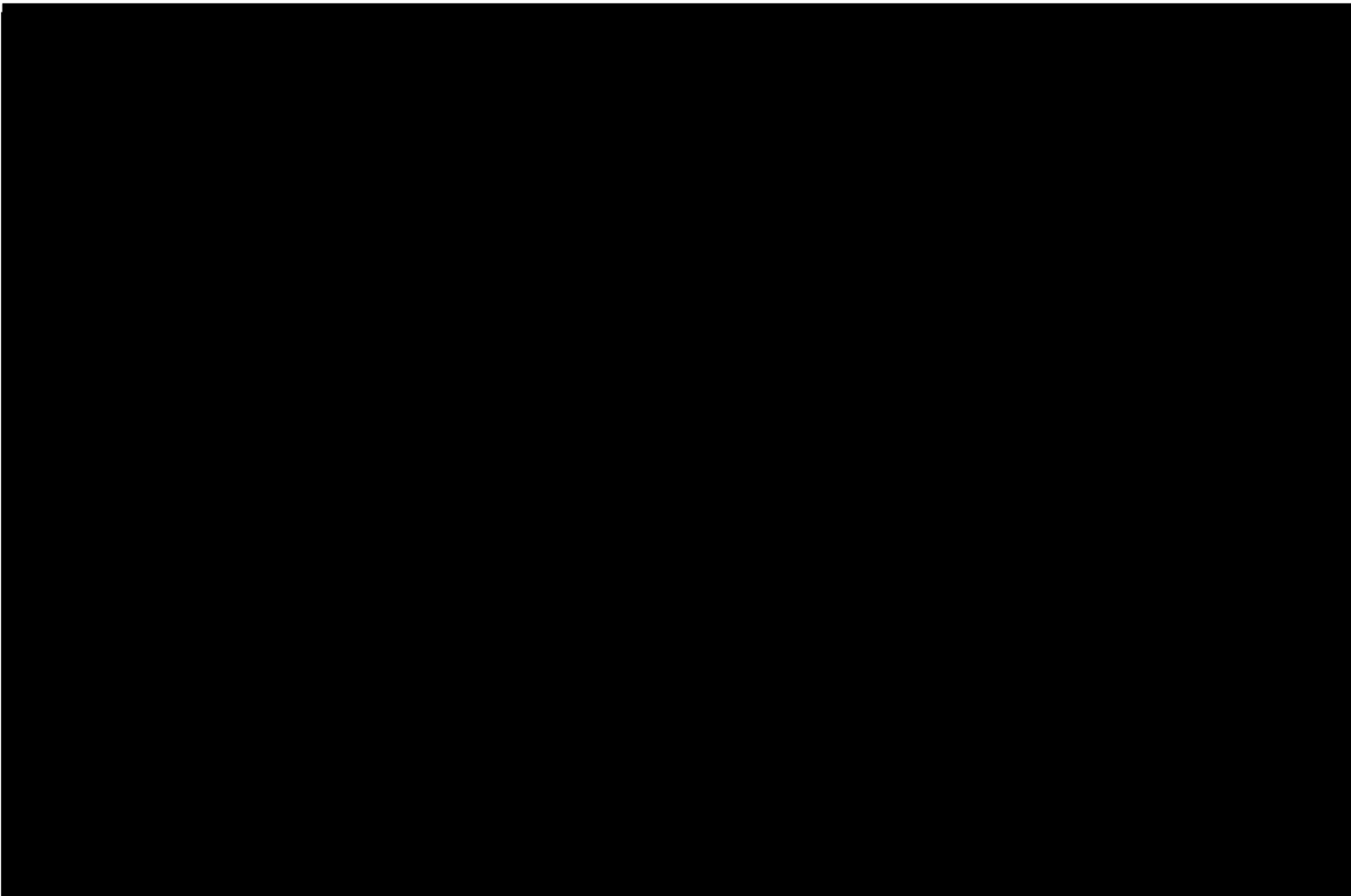
Is there a specific reason why it can't be shown on the ABC given it's very cheap content?

Thanks,

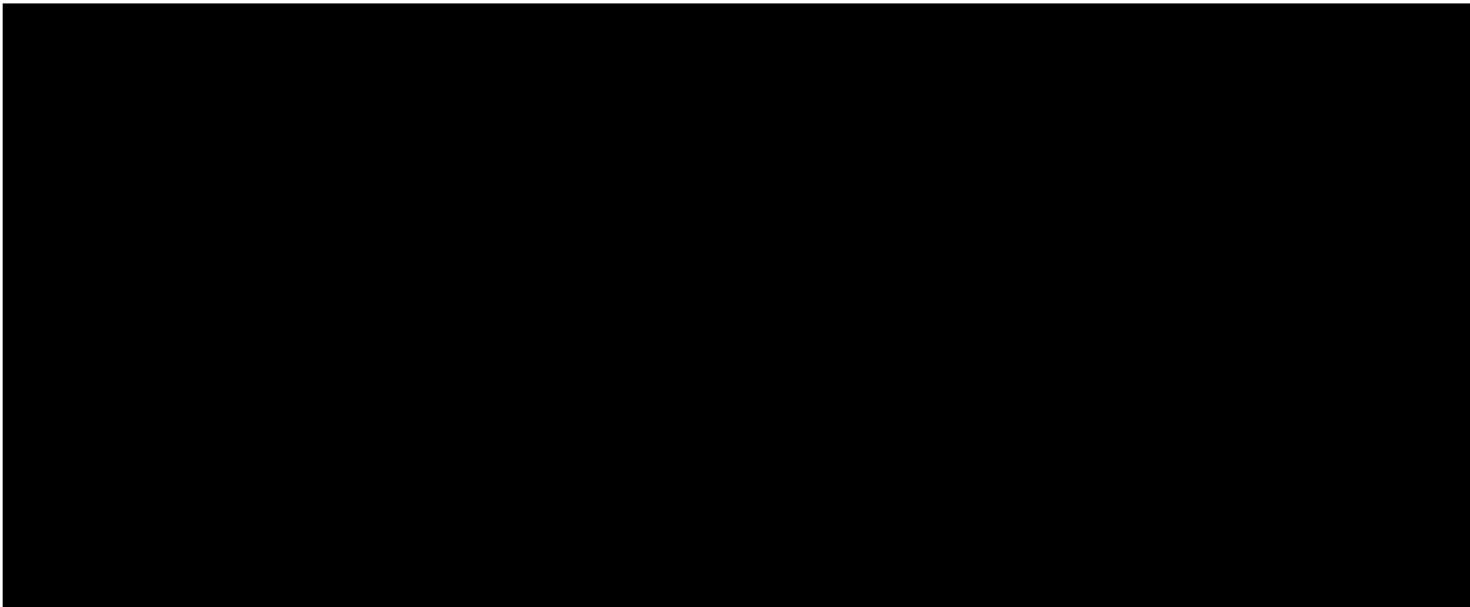
Amanda

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Amanda Meade  
Media correspondent  
[Guardian Australia](#)  
E [amanda.meade@theguardian.com](mailto:amanda.meade@theguardian.com)  
M [redacted] 47F  
T @meadea  
Media column [The Weekly Beast](#)



- The ABC issued a statement in response to media reports and queries, including criticism from Anthony Albanese MP on social media, about the decision to not acquire a 110-minute documentary on Australian band Radio Birdman. The ABC said that as a responsible public broadcaster, we don't acquire content that we do not have a need for. The ABC's slate for Ausmusic Month is already filled with programs celebrating Australian music and artists, including a new music show, live performances, drama series and documentaries about Australian artists past and present, plus our unrivalled commitment to emerging and established Australian musicians on triple j, Double J and triple j Unearthed. We will also offer new children's content aimed at inspiring Australia's next generations of musicians and music lovers. Also, the documentary did not meet the ABC's criteria for either audience appeal or our quality standards.



[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 24 August 2018 10:28 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Radio Birdman doco

The ABC did opt to pass. As a responsible public broadcaster, we don't acquire content that we do not have a need for. In this case, it didn't make sense to spend money on a 110-minute documentary that did not meet our criteria for either audience appeal or our quality standards. We regularly make such decisions in line with our budget and our priority of commissioning new and distinctive content for audiences.

Radio Birdman played an important role in Australia's music history and the development of our independent music scene. Credit to them for their high energy, uncompromising attitude and, as one prominent fan put it, "outlaw reputation". But there are so many significant Australian bands and only so much time in the day. Our slate for Ausmusic Month is already filled with programs celebrating Australian music and artists, including a new music show, live performances, drama series and documentaries about Australian artists past and present, plus our unrivalled commitment to emerging and established Australian musicians on triple j, Double J and triple j Unearthed.

We will also offer new children's content aimed at inspiring Australia's next generation of musicians and music lovers.

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 24 August 2018 10:22 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>; David N Anderson [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>  
**Subject:** RE: Radio Birdman doco

Good opportunity to use our statement.  
But I think the reference to "broadcast standards" is confusing – it immediately prompts the question: "Which broadcast standards?" I would prefer going back to the original line ("the quality of the documentary does not quite live up to the quality of the band...") or deleting this part altogether.  
The "jazz fusion" line is just a joke, Joyce.  
[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 24 August 2018 10:14 AM  
**To:** David N Anderson [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>; [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>  
**Subject:** FW: Radio Birdman doco

Why don't we take this opportunity to use our statement. Tweaked version below:

The ABC did opt to pass. As a responsible public broadcaster, we don't acquire content that we do not have a need for. In this case, it didn't make sense to spend money on a 110-minute documentary that did not meet our criteria for either audience appeal or our broadcast quality standards. We regularly make such decisions in line with our budget and our priority of commissioning new and distinctive content for audiences.

Radio Birdman played an important role in Australia's music history and the development of our independent music scene. Credit to them for their high energy, uncompromising attitude and, as one prominent fan put it, "outlaw reputation". But there are so many significant Australian bands and only so much time in the day. Our slate for Ausmusic Month is already filled with programs celebrating Australian music and artists, including a new music show, live performances, drama series and documentaries about Australian artists past and present, plus our unrivalled commitment to emerging and established Australian musicians on triple j, Double J and triple j Unearthed.

We will also launch new children's programs to inspire Australia's next generations of punks, rockers, metalheads, rappers, pop artists, hip hoppers, country acts, classical musicians, ambient dubbers, jazz fusion aficionados and more. [REDACTED]

**From:** Karl Quinn <[kquinn@fairfaxmedia.com.au](mailto:kquinn@fairfaxmedia.com.au)>  
**Sent:** Friday, 24 August 2018 10:04 AM  
**To:** Sally Jackson [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@abc.net.au](mailto:[REDACTED]@abc.net.au)>  
**Subject:** Radio Birdman doco

Hi Sally,

I'm doing a small story on the Radio Birdman doco Descent Into the Maelstrom and the producer's claim that it was offered to the ABC, and could have been acquired for for \$10,000, late last year, but after an initial expression of interest (probably for inclusion in Australian Music Month) it was declined.

The producer claims Dallas Krueger said there was no money to acquire it, and that Friday nights were dedicated to British dramas, and that outside of Australian Music Month it really didn't fit into the schedule.

You may be aware that Anthony Albanese has raised this in Parliament and has written to the ABC urging a rethink. His office tells me he has not yet received a reply.

I'm filing this afternoon but wanted to give you (the ABC) or Dallas an opportunity to put your position in your own words.

I'm on s 47F [REDACTED] or 03- [REDACTED]

Best

**Karl Quinn**  
**Senior Entertainment Writer**  
**Fairfax Media**

email: [kquinn@fairfaxmedia.com.au](mailto:kquinn@fairfaxmedia.com.au)  
tel: +61 (0)3 [REDACTED]

Facebook: [karlquinnjournalist](#)  
Podcast: [The Clappers](#)  
Twitter: [@karlkwin](#)

snail mail: Level 2, Media House, 655 Collins Street, Melbourne Docklands, Vic 3008

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**Peter Munro**

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 24 August 2018 12:03 PM  
**To:** Amanda Meade  
**Subject:** Re: Weekly Beast errors

Sure. But nor did you put to us any claims about ABC overspending its budget.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Amanda Meade [REDACTED]@abc.net.au  
**Sent:** Friday, August 24, 2018 11:44  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: Weekly Beast errors

You sent the statement a day after I asked the question and after we'd published but I will include some of it.

[REDACTED]

On Fri, 24 Aug 2018 at 11:31 am, [REDACTED]@abc.net.au wrote:

Hi Amanda,

There are some errors in today's Weekly Beast column that should be corrected as soon as possible please, namely:

**RADIO BIRDMAN**

- I hope you might include our statement emailed to you this morning, which explains the reasons for our decision.
- It is incorrect to claim that "the ABC TV division has overspent its budget by several millions and is looking to make cuts anywhere it can, so perhaps the little doco is a victim of that".
  - The ABC TV division has not overspent its budget.
  - The ABC's decision in relation to the Radio Birdman documentary had nothing to do with ABC budgets, as our statement makes clear.
- Equally, the headline "Budget woes cause a flap at the ABC" is incorrect for the reasons outlined above.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 24 August 2018 12:33 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Guardian item

I'm tempted to do more, but I think on balance we leave it for now.

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 24 August 2018 12:16 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>  
**Subject:** RE: Guardian item

I figured time was of the essence, so emailed Amanda with the corrections.  
She has corrected the errors about Exposed.

In terms of Radio Birdman, she hasn't changed the headline referring to "Budget woes" and hasn't removed the claim that ABC TV has overspent its budget – simply added a denial from us. And she has included a small par from our statement.

Revised copy below. Your call on whether we publish the statement in full online along with our denial about the budget claim. Let me know.

## Budget woes cause a flap at the ABC

Labor frontbencher [Anthony Albanese](#) has thrown his weight behind a campaign to get the ABC to reverse its decision not to buy music documentary *Descent into the Maelstrom* about 1970s punk band Radio Birdman. The [critically acclaimed film](#), argues director Jonathan Sequeira, is an important part of cultural history and has been offered to Aunty at a bargain basement price.

The ABC has had the film to consider since 2017, but now says it can't find a slot for it, even though it is original Australian content which would appear to fulfil the ABC's charter.

"Despite writing to the national broadcaster and raising the issue in the Parliament, I have not received a response from the ABC in regards to their decision not to acquire the broadcast rights to *Descent into the Maelstrom – the Radio Birdman Story*," Albo told *Weekly Beast*.

"I am firmly of the view that Radio Birdman's contribution to Australian musical and cultural history is significant.

"That the ABC has chosen not to air the film, nor respond to me, is a disappointment to say the least." Sources told the *Weekly Beast* the ABC TV division has overspent its budget by several millions and is looking to make cuts anywhere it can, so perhaps the little doco is a victim of that. But the ABC denies it has overspent its budget and says the doco was passed over for other reasons.

The ABC said in a statement: "As a responsible public broadcaster, we don't acquire content that we do not have a need for. In this case, it didn't make sense to spend money

on a 110-minute documentary that did not meet our criteria for either audience appeal or our quality standards.”

Although Albo’s letter to the head of ABC TV and entertainment David Anderson has gone unanswered, the exec did appear on ABC Drive on Radio National on Wednesday for [a chat with Patricia Karvelas](#).

Anderson admitted he did not have a replacement for the two recently axed programs, [Tom Ballard’s Tonightly](#) and [The Checkout](#), but said they were both too expensive to keep on the slate. The comedy show cost “multiple millions” and its audience was going down not up, Anderson said. There is hope for The Checkout though. In a bit of a [Trumpesque double negative](#), Anderson said it was “not a never again proposition”.

We believe the price tag was for Tonightly, with its daily production schedule and cast of performers and writers, was around \$5m for a show which was bringing in 30,000 viewers. [Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

Anderson said the new ABC Yours campaign using celebrities to promote the national broadcaster was a way of making sure “everyone knows how important the ABC is” and denied the broadcaster is at war with the government.

“I think that any government of the day will have an opinion,” Anderson said. “I’ve been at the ABC for a while, 29 years, and there is always pressure from government.”

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Friday, 24 August 2018 11:12 AM  
To: [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>  
Subject: RE: Guardian item

Scratch that – I see her copy online now.

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Friday, 24 August 2018 11:06 AM  
To: [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>  
Subject: RE: Guardian item

Here’s what I have in total to email to Amanda – am I missing anything?  
Also, is Amanda sending you these pieces in advance – I can’t see them on the Guardian website?

Hi Amanda,

There are some errors in today’s Weekly Beast column that should be corrected as soon as possible please, namely:

#### RADIO BIRDMAN

- I hope you might include our statement emailed to you this morning.
- It is incorrect to claim that “the ABC TV division has overspent its budget by several millions and is looking to make cuts anywhere it can, so perhaps the little doco is a victim of that”.
  - The ABC TV division has not overspent its budget.
  - The ABC’s decision in relation to the Radio Birdman documentary had nothing to do with ABC budgets, as our statement makes clear.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 24 August 2018 10:53 AM  
**To:** David N Anderson [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>; [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>  
**Subject:** RE: Guardian item

[REDACTED] can you get together a list of corrections from her items today – the ones from [REDACTED] as well? We can send as a job lot.

**From:** David N Anderson  
**Sent:** Friday, 24 August 2018 10:52 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>  
**Subject:** Re: Guardian item

Yes please!

David N Anderson  
Director Entertainment & Specialist  
ABC

P [REDACTED]  
M [REDACTED]

On 24 Aug 2018, at 10:51 am, [REDACTED]@abc.net.au> wrote:

The claim that ABC TV has overspent its budget is incorrect. The financial year has barely started for goodness sake.  
Would you like me to ask Amanda to correct this?

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 24 August 2018 10:38 AM  
**To:** David N Anderson [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>; [REDACTED]@abc.net.au>  
**Subject:** Guardian item

I'm happy to fact check this if required. For example "overspent its budget"?

## Budget woes cause a flap at the ABC

Labor frontbencher [Anthony Albanese](#) has thrown his weight behind a campaign to get the ABC to reverse its decision not to buy music documentary *Descent into the Maelstrom* about 1970s punk band Radio Birdman. The [critically acclaimed film](#), argues director Jonathan Sequeira, is an important part of cultural history and has been offered to Aunty at a bargain basement price.