

Hand Slapped Over ABC Interviews

ABC Illawarra radio presenter and producer Peter Hand returns to work this morning after more than a month's absence from daily morning programs. The reason for his "break" can now be revealed.

On August 4, Hand conducted an on-air interview with Federal Minister for Vocational and Technical Education and Training Gary Hardgrave after the announcement the Government would provide \$19.8 million for an Australian Technical College in Wollongong.

Towards the end of the interview, when Mr. Hardgrave accused Hand of misleading his listeners, the presenter ended the interview, suggesting the minister had "had a turn".

On August 29, Hand interviewed South Coast Labour Council secretary Arthur Rorris about a union rally which was to be held later that day outside the Wollongong office of Liberal Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells.

The senator, who has taken it upon herself to campaign against what she sees as the ABC's pro-left and anti-conservative agenda, took exception to both interviews, believing they breached Aunty's guidelines. She promptly fired off a letter of complaint to ABC managing director Mark Scott.

In her letter, the senator claimed Hand made no attempt to discuss the merits of the college and used the interview to debate whether the colleges duplicated existing state-based TAFEs.

Her complaint over the Rorris interview centred on her claims that alternative points of view were not sought and that the interview was nothing more than a crudely

disguised "informercial" for the union action.

Mr. Scott wrote back to confirm he concurred with the senator's complaints.

Hand was stood down pending an investigation. Mr. Scott ordered a broad review of the ABC Illawarra morning program and found that there were a number of stories "covered from a union angle which have not achieved the required balance".

Enquiries to the ABC's head office in Sydney yesterday afternoon brought this reply: "ABC Illawarra program maker Peter Hand was rostered but not required for work while the ABC investigated allegations of serious breaches of ABC editorial policies. This action is in line with standard ABC procedure.

"The independent assessment found that Mr. Hand's interview of August 4, 2006 with Federal Minister for Vocational and Technical Education Mr. Gary Hardgrave and of August 29, 2006 with Mr. Arthur Rorris breached the ABC's editorial policies. Mr. Hand has been asked to report for duty tomorrow, Tuesday, October 31, on the morning program shift as a producer."



Hand back: Peter Hand has returned to work at the ABC after an investigation