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The ABC's extraordinary podcasting performance

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By *Stephen Mayne, ABC regular for more than six years until last week*

All those ABC critics who attack the national broadcaster for not attracting large audiences are eating plenty of humble pie over its extraordinary performance when it comes to podcasting. ABC producer Gordon Taylor took an audience of about 60 spin doctors through the figures a couple of weeks back at the MEAA's public affairs convention in Sydney, and it certainly left me gobsmacked.

Podcasting only started on the ABC in August 2004 but there are now 1.6 million successful downloads a month, which compares very favourably in per capita terms with the BBC, which is doing 3.5 million a month despite its huge global audience. The ABC has about 20 entries in the iTunes Australia top 100 and [The Chaser vodcast](#) is number one in its category and growing fast.

Even more amazing was the statistic that only 17% of the downloads come from within Australia because the US dominates with 69%. This reflects strong interest from academia in programs like *Life Matters*, which is doing 140,000 downloads a week. Phillip Adams also has a large and growing global following for *Late Night Live* - which includes a regular chat with our own Christian Kerr that is [offered as a podcast](#).

If you thought iPods were all about pimply teens, think again. The largest age bracket for ABC downloads is 40-54 and the usage does skew strongly on gender terms with 81% of users being male.

Gordon Taylor said it was often hard to predict which programs would take off. For instance, Triple J's nightly current affairs program *Hack* is the youth station's most popular podcast, easily outpacing alternatives such as *Sunday Night Safran* and *This Sporting Life*.

Podcasting is perhaps something that Crikey should get into. The weekly spot I do with Tim Cox on ABC Tasmania has been podcast all year, but doubtless rates towards the bottom of the 115 different podcast offerings that Aunty has made available. Christian Kerr will probably be taking over the spot from tomorrow as I bow out to go electioneering. Have a listen to the farewell sign-off [here](#).