

CHAPTER 12

PRESS, RADIO AND TELEVISION

K.S. INGLIS

AUSTRALIANS IN 1939 had 55 daily newspapers. Thirty-nine were published in country towns, but were battling against the drift of people to cities and the speedier delivery of metropolitan dailies. These numbered sixteen, and had eleven owners. Sydney also had three small suburban dailies. The two largest cities each sustained three papers in the morning and one in the evening; in Sydney the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily News* and the evening *Sun*; in Melbourne the *Argus*, the *Age*, the *Sun News-Pictorial* and the evening *Herald*. In Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth one paper had a monopoly of the morning and one of the evening. Hobart had only the morning *Mercury*. Distance prevented the daily press of one city from competing with that of any other. To the interstate traveller, the first signs of difference after crossing the border were advertisements for unfamiliar beer and posters for unknown newspapers.

The dailies appeared from Monday to Saturday. All states except Victoria and Tasmania also had Sunday papers. Sydney had the *Sunday Sun* and *Truth*, and from 11 November 1939 the *Sunday Telegraph*. Adelaide had the *Mail*, Brisbane the *Sunday Mail* and *Truth*, Perth the *Sunday Times*. In Melbourne an old law prohibited Sunday papers.

Most of these papers had been founded well before 1900. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, published under that title by John Fairfax from 1842, had as chairman of directors and managing director in 1939 his great-grandson Warwick. In Melbourne David Syme was lord of the *Age* from 1859 until he died in 1908, when the paper was carried on as a trust by his widow and five sons, of whom the youngest, Oswald, became chairman in 1939. The *Age's* ancient rival the *Argus*, run by Edward Wilson from 1848, with partners was controlled now by the Wilson trust and descendants of the partners. In Hobart the *Mercury* was controlled by descendants of John Davies, who had begun its daily publication in 1858. Adelaide's newspaper prince was Sir Langdon Bonython, editor of the *Advertiser* from 1882 to 1927, sole proprietor from 1893 to 1929; but by 1939 control of the paper had passed to the Melbourne-based company Herald and Weekly Times Ltd. The *West*





Censorship: a Commonwealth Police officer reads a seized issue of the Sydney Morning Herald, Monday 17 April 1944. In World War II, as in World War I, newspapers were subjected to censorship by the federal government.

Proprietors complained that the censors were cutting criticisms of the government that had nothing to do with national security. One of the rules was that readers could not be told that reports had been censored. The Daily Telegraph for 15 April 1944 and the following day's Sunday Telegraph appeared with blank spaces after the censor had prohibited publication of statements referring to censorship. On 17 April both the Herald and the Telegraph contained reports of these statements. Most copies were impounded before they left their buildings. The proprietors resorted to the High Court, and the government yielded.

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CIRCULATION OF CAPITAL CITY DAILIES IN 1939

SYDNEY	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	234 000	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	206 000
	<i>Daily News</i>	na	<i>Sun</i>	234 000
MELBOURNE	<i>Sun News-Pictorial</i>	247 000	<i>Argus</i>	106 000
	<i>Herald</i>	223 000		
ADELAIDE	<i>Advertiser</i>	104 000	<i>News</i>	42 000
BRISBANE	<i>Courier Mail</i>	76 000	<i>Telegraph</i>	76 000
PERTH	<i>West Australian</i>	73 000	<i>Daily News</i>	28 000
HOBART	<i>Mercury</i>	22 000		
CANBERRA	<i>Canberra Times</i>	na		

Source: M. Goot, 'Newspaper circulation 1932-1977' in P. Spearritt and D. Walker (eds), *Australian popular culture*, Sydney 1979, 215.

CIRCULATION OF CAPITAL CITY DAILIES IN 1985

NATIONAL	<i>Australian</i>	135 931	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>	67 485
SYDNEY	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	257 225	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	264 517
	<i>Sun</i>	234 910	<i>Mirror</i>	273 248
MELBOURNE	<i>Sun News-Pictorial</i>	541 977	<i>Age</i>	230 487
	<i>Herald</i>	217 284		
ADELAIDE	<i>Advertiser</i>	211 820	<i>News</i>	150 909
BRISBANE	<i>Courier Mail</i>	213 530	<i>Sun</i>	124 791
	<i>Telegraph</i>	110 150		
PERTH	<i>West Australian</i>	237 574	<i>Daily News</i>	95 034
HOBART	<i>Mercury</i>	54 417		
CANBERRA	<i>Canberra Times</i>	43 649		

Note: This table excludes Darwin, where the *Northern Territory News* had a circulation of 17 000.

Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations September 1985, as reported in *SMH*, 30 November 1985.

Australian had been owned from 1887 to 1916 by Sir John Winthrop Hackett; in 1939 it and the evening *Daily News* belonged to a company which had bought the morning paper from the Hackett estate in 1926.

Keith Murdoch, of the *Herald* and *Weekly Times*, was one of a new breed of newspaper controllers—Australian born, acquiring and transforming established papers or launching new ones, eyes open for investments, and wanting, as the press pioneers had wanted, to be rich and powerful and to do good. By 1939 Sir Keith—knighted in 1933 on the recommendation of Joseph Lyons, whom he had helped to become prime minister—had secured for his company control of the *Advertiser* and the *News* in Adelaide, while he and a partner personally owned the *Courier-Mail* in Brisbane. In Melbourne Murdoch's firm published both the *Herald* and the *Sun News-Pictorial*. In 'the Murdoch press' Australia had its first chain of newspapers extending beyond one state. Another new man, Frank Packer, acquired

the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* in 1936 in partnership with E.G. Theodore. Like Murdoch, Packer had begun his working life as a reporter. By 1939 he was known as a fearsome boss. 'Power was Frank Packer's business,' Donald Horne recalls.

The continuity of old dynasties and the establishment of new ones depended on the appearance of sons. In 1939 James Fairfax was six years old. Rupert Murdoch was eight. Clyde and Kerry Packer were four and two. The David Syme trust provided that when the last of his sons died, the estate would be divided among his grandchildren.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* was doing well. Circulation was 234 000—nearly 30 000 clear of Packer's *Telegraph*. The Fairfaxes could go on excluding such frivolities, now familiar elsewhere, as cartoons, comic strips, crossword puzzles and the bribe of free insurance; they could continue to offer long reports of parliamentary debates and unsensational court cases and sonorous editorials.

In Melbourne by 1939 the circulation of the *Argus* was 106 000, having passed for the first time the sales of its old rival, the *Age*. The Symes' paper, traditionally preferred by working men, had been hit harder than the conservative *Argus* by the coming in 1922 of the *Sun News-Pictorial*, Australia's first tabloid. The *Age* was resting precariously on an old reputation for radical liberal policies. If the *Age* survived, the feat would owe more to its small advertisements than to its journalism.

To the small group of journalists and other professional readers acquainted with the press of more than one state, the most interesting paper, and the most *modern*, was the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*. It dealt more with issues than its fellow-tabloid the *Sun News-Pictorial*, and it approached them in a spirit less stuffy than the broadsheet *Sydney Morning Herald*. It was written in a short punchy style, which was the emerging style in other cities, too. 'Always', said Murdoch, in an office memo, 'the need will be for condensation—all the news pointed, clear, terse—never an unnecessary word.'

Sydney's *Daily News* was doomed. From 1924 to 1937 it had been the *Labor Daily*, organ of the Labor party. It was weakened by factional conflict and never gained a circulation higher than 80 000. At the end of 1939 it was produced by communists quixotically combining a quest for more popularity with denunciation of the war. The *Daily News* was sold in 1940 to Packer, who closed it down.

Two weekly papers of independent proprietorship were stocked by newsagents in every state. The *Bulletin*, published in Sydney since 1880 declaring 'Australia for the White Man' on its masthead, had been patron and guardian of Australian literature since it had printed young Henry Lawson and young 'Banjo' Paterson. It had been home to cartoonists from Phil May to Norman Lindsay, had once been known as 'the bushman's Bible' and was now, like the original Bible, more talked about than read. 'The "Bulletin" is a clever youth,' its genius J.F. Archibald had once said. 'It will become a dull old man.' By 1939 it was. Sales were about 45 000, lower than in the 1880s. When courting advertisers, the *Bulletin's* owners cited a survey showing that seven in every ten readers owned cars. 'Advertise in "The Bulletin" and talk to the men with money': a strange text for the bushman's Bible. *Smith's weekly* had a higher circulation—130 000 in 1939—though it had fallen from more than 200 000 in 1929. It was cast from its foundation in 1919 as the paper for returned soldiers, and year after year it ranted in the cause of the old digger (and the overlapping 'little man') and mythologised the war in 'The Unofficial History of the AIF'. Though more popular than the *Bulletin*, *Smith's weekly* was also struggling. In 1939 its founder, Joynton Smith, sold out to a company whose principal shareholder was the industrialist W.J. Smith; he was no relation, but the paper was still in fact as in name *Smith's weekly*.

One new weekly with national circulation was flourishing. *Pix*, launched in 1938 by Associated Newspapers, publishers of the *Sydney Sun*, was an essay in the new photojournalism pioneered in the USA by *Life* and in Britain by *Picture post*.

The best sellers among national weeklies were produced for women. The homeliest, the *Australian woman's mirror*, had been published in Sydney since 1924 by the proprietors of the *Bulletin*. It far outsold its manly partner and helped keep it going. It attracted more readers than the *New idea*, Melbourne's contribution to the genre, or *Woman*, published in Sydney. But it was well behind the *Australian women's weekly*, founded in 1933, whose circulation was soon awesome: 400 000 in 1939, and on its way to 700 000 by 1946. Frank Greenop, editor of a rival string of magazines, estimated that it sold more copies per head of population than any other publication in the world. Frank Packer and E.G. Theodore owned it from the beginning. George Warnecke, who edited the paper from 1933 to 1938, devised the formula, described by Greenop as 'a combination of general news and social and fashion notes, with a generous supplement of fiction'. The paper was federal in character, the news and notes varying from state to state, while the fiction and other features remained uniform. Most of the fiction was syndicated romance from England and America, richly illustrated in colour and in black and white by well-paid Australian artists, who also created the coloured covers displayed prominently by every newsagent.

For the next 50 years, observers tried to explain the paper's success. To the Marxists Bill Bonney and Helen Wilson the clue was 'the packaging of femininity'; in Greenop's tradesman's vision, clever layout was important. What still awaits explanation is how, in a country where men were famously proud of their masculinity, the *Women's weekly* attracted and kept male readers—a matter of keen interest to Greenop, who edited a monthly magazine directed entirely at men. *Man*, launched in 1936, was published by K.G. Murray, who took the New York monthly *Esquire* as a model. Like *Esquire*, *Man* mixed literate fiction and sexy cartoons; *Man* also offered the new photojournalism, Australian geography, and a commentary on foreign affairs. At 2s it was certainly for men with cars; and more than 60 000 of them were buying it in 1939. In dwelling on outdoor Australia *Man* was competing with the monthly *Walkabout*, published by the Australian National Travel Association since 1934, and *Wild life*, established in 1938 by Murdoch.

Several national monthlies encouraged Australians to improve and cherish their home (as Australians called their house). *House and garden*, imported from London, competed with the *Australian home beautiful*, produced by the Herald and Weekly Times, the *Australian home journal*, and Fairfax's *Home*, a sumptuous production killed by wartime austerity in 1942. *Home* was modelled on the New York *Vogue*, and exemplified a trend, beginning after World War I, for Australian magazines to show American influence while newspapers still followed English styles. The *American Reader's digest*, begun in 1922 and by 1939 the world's best-selling monthly, had some subscribers in Australia and many more readers, being much resold in secondhand book shops. It had also several local imitators: the *Digest of world reading* and *Life digest*, both published in Melbourne, and in Sydney the *Digest of digests*. One wit saw a hole in the market for a *Digest of digests of digests*.

The most old-fashioned monthly, still influenced by nineteenth-century British literary magazines, was the *Australian journal*, for which Marcus Clarke had written *His natural life* in 1870–71. Since then, independently owned, it had steadily published Australian fiction, and in 1939 had a circulation of more than 50 000.

For more than a decade the press in Australia had been facing the challenge of radio, the new medium that carried messages directly into people's homes. By 1939 at least seven in every ten households were buying the annual licence which gave



The radio in the home. By 1939 most households had either a 'mantel model' or, if they could afford it and had the space, a 'console' designed to be the centrepiece of the lounge room. Families listened to prewar sets from 1939 onwards and by 1946 were being invited to replace them. Australian women's weekly, 2 Mar 1946.

mag → American newspapers - English

RADIO

them legitimate access to whichever of 126 transmitters—26 offering programs from the publicly-owned Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), 100 commercial—their wireless sets could pick up.

Radio offered the press dangerous competition both as supplier of news and as vehicle for advertising. As Europe plunged into war Australians got more of their news by radio than ever before. But except for special broadcasts such as the declaration of war on 3 September 1939, the news supplied to radio stations was rationed severely by press proprietors. Within the ABC, frustration at this arrangement had prompted the beginning of the commission's own modest news service in 1936, extended in 1938 by a supply of cables from London and in 1939 by the appointment of a Canberra correspondent. Newspaper proprietors did their best to stop these stirrings of independence. The Murdoch press was especially outraged, calling for a reduction in the ABC's revenue from licence fees to curtail its competition with private enterprise. The ABC was not allowed to have its programs paid for by commercial sponsors.

The press and the commercial radio stations competed hard for advertisements. The surest means of preventing radio stations from threatening the older medium was for newspapermen to own them. In 1938–39 two press groups formed networks of radio stations, called Macquarie and Major, to give advertisers a number of simultaneous outlets; and a number of individual stations were owned wholly or in part by newspaper firms.

Newspaper owners also supplied the burgeoning market for program guides with gossip about radio 'personalities'. Murdoch published the *Listener* in Victoria, Associated Newspapers the *Wireless weekly* for New South Wales. The ABC started its own paper, the *ABC weekly*.

The ABC gave listeners in the cities a choice between the 'Australian national program' and the 'State national program', the latter having more items of local origin rather than those on relay from headquarters in Sydney, and more that were in programmers' terminology, 'lowbrow', rather than 'highbrow'. Most offerings on each network, however, were of 'medium standard', to attract listeners for light refreshment and induce them to stay for solid fare. Musical programs were centred on the six state symphony orchestras which the ABC had built, and overseas visitors were contracted to conduct and perform with them. Music for lower brows was played by Jim Davidson's ABC National Dance Band. In drama the ABC ran a season *From Shakespeare to Shaw* during 1939, and performed many plays by Australian authors (70 per cent of all its drama productions). For 'light entertainment' there were programs drawing on musical comedy and revue. Talks, serious and light, were a staple on both networks. Professor Walter Murdoch's ruminations from Perth were enjoyed in all states. Saturday afternoon on the 'state' network was occupied by sport. In 1939 a federally planned children's session began, running experimentally until 1941 when the team launched the *Argonauts*, an enterprise in which thousands of young people would discover lasting talents.

The news bulletins were read with the sound of authority: the voice of male upper-middle-class southeast England. Whether reading news or introducing concerts or talks, ABC announcers were anonymous. Some commercial announcers also sounded respectably British. Commercial stations played some 'classical' music on records. But the British voice on commercial radio was more conversational, as fitted people selling things; and there were also homemade part-American voices, such as Jack Davey's. Norman Banks of 3KZ was bilingual: recognisably Australian at the football, sepulchrally English for the classics. The classical music he and his commercial colleagues announced, moreover, was light and short, to fit in the advertisements. The characteristic commercial sound had



The ABC as national broadcaster. Founded in 1932, it was cherished by 1939 as the first agency of enlightenment to bring music, drama, talks and news as quickly to people out in the country as to those in cities, and the first to carry its message simultaneously to people in all states. 'But for the ABC,' the writer George Farwell reflected as he looked back on the 1930s, 'we would have inhabited a land of perpetual drought.' This booklet was issued in 1949.

'Hi-Ho, everybody, this is Ja-a-ck Davey!' A generation of listeners were familiar with this greeting in quiz and variety shows.

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hypocritically

Death of a newspaper. Newsday, a chirpy evening tabloid launched in 1969 by the proprietors of the Age to compete with the broadsheet Herald, lasted only seven months. Goliath had slain David, said the independent Sunday Observer on 3 May, describing the victor as 'one of the finest evening papers in the world'. But then Goliath began to weaken, like many evening papers in places where fewer people went home on public transport and more watched television in the evenings. Sydney, however, sustained two evening papers, the Sun and the Mirror.

YOUR LAST NEWSDAY

This is the last issue of **NEWSDAY**. The paper ceases publication today.

David Syme & Co. Ltd. announces the decision with deep regret and after several months of intense effort and consideration.

NEWSDAY was launched seven months ago as Melbourne's second evening paper. The company believed there was a long-term opportunity for a second paper to establish itself with readers and advertisers as a viable concern.

Our initial targets were modest. None of them has been achieved.

Had there been the slightest indication that Victorian readers wanted a new evening paper, **NEWSDAY** would have continued. There has been no such indication.

Instead, **NEWSDAY**'s circulation has steadily declined despite strenuous efforts to halt the decline. In recent weeks, sales have been substantially less than our minimum targets.

As a result, support from advertisers has also declined.

(apart from the advertisements) three main elements: crooners and dance bands on records; quizzes; and drama, from the hour-long Lux Radio Theatre to quarter-hour melodramatic and comic serials in setting rural (*Dad and Dave*) or suburban (*Martin's corner*). Much of the drama was performed by Australian actors from American scripts, but an increasing proportion was of wholly local origin.

Surveys showed that only 20 per cent of radio listeners at any given time were tuned to ABC stations. This finding did not seriously concern ABC administrators, who were confident of their cultural mission. Theirs was the first agency of enlightenment to bring music, drama, talks and news as quickly to people in the country as to anybody else, and the first to carry its message simultaneously to people in all states. In these respects the ABC was right to put the word 'national' in its call-signs.

Critics of press and radio in 1939 were troubled by the concentration of newspaper ownership, deplored sensational headlines, expressed concern at the lack of solid reading, and found the ABC narrow and its competitors trivial. Within the labour movement, anger at the virtually unanimous opposition of the capitalist press to the party of reform was combined with pessimism about the prospects for any Labor paper. In the only book-length study on sale in 1939, *Press, radio and world affairs: Australia's outlook*, the editor, W. MacMahon Ball, and contributors of four case studies concluded that citizens were getting inadequate accounts of world events. This trenchant set of essays opened the eyes of many readers who had never before been offered a serious detached analysis of what they read and heard.

MacMahon Ball wrote of 'press' and 'radio', not of 'the mass media' or 'the media'. Those latter terms had originated in the USA in the early years of radio, characterising press and radio as vehicles for advertising. Their use became widespread in this country only after the introduction of television. In the 1970s courses in 'media studies' proliferated, and were served by books such as *The media*, by Keith Windschuttle (1984), whose subtitle, *A new analysis of the press, television, radio and advertising in Australia*, registers the centrality of advertising to the concept.



In 1987, newspapers, by one test, were faring better than in 1939: the capital cities had eighteen dailies, three more now than then, and Sydney had one suburban daily. Outside the capitals they had declined by one, from 39 to 38. Readers everywhere had a slightly wider choice of dailies as two of metropolitan origin were sold in every state.

In Melbourne the *Argus* disappeared in 1957 after more than a century. The old owners had sold out in 1949 to the proprietors of the London *Daily Mirror*, making the *Argus* our first overseas-owned daily. The *Mirror* had become the largest-selling paper in the world by catering for the tastes and sentiments of working-class, Labor-voting readers, and the new owners of the *Argus* tried that formula in Melbourne. It failed. 'The fair-play paper' made little headway against 'the people's paper', as the *Sun News-Pictorial* confidently proclaimed itself. The men from London, wrote Clive Turnbull, *Argus* editorial adviser from 1949 to 1952, had 'much under-estimated the mental level of the Australian public'. The *Sun News-Pictorial* was the model for a Sydney *Daily Mirror* launched by Ezra Norton in 1941. The *Mirror* was Australia's first afternoon tabloid, and sold as well as its competitor the *Sun*.

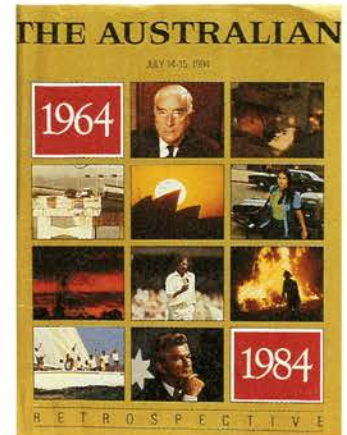
The most remarkable new development was the appearance of two national morning dailies. By the time Geoffrey Blainey named the tyranny of distance in

1966, two papers were defying it. The *Australian Financial Review*, published in Sydney by John Fairfax and Sons, went daily in 1963, having begun as a weekly in 1951 and gone biweekly in 1961. Costing a shilling compared with fourpence for other dailies, directed mainly at businessmen, reaching only about 20 000 subscribers and satisfying the most far-flung of them if it arrived in time to be read in the office rather than over breakfast, the *Financial Review* did not quite refute the established wisdom that Australian geography and culture made a truly national daily impossible. Rupert Murdoch's *Australian* did that in 1964.

Before Keith Murdoch died in 1952 he had secured personal control of the Adelaide *News* and bequeathed it to his son, Rupert, who was then 21 and studying at Oxford after working as a cadet reporter on the Melbourne *Herald*. From that base in Adelaide the second Murdoch moved out to buy the Melbourne firm that published the weekly *New Idea* and Perth's *Sunday Times*. He went into television, launching the pocket-sized guide *TV week* when the new medium came to Melbourne and Sydney and getting one of two licences granted for commercial television in Adelaide. In 1960 Murdoch turned to Sydney, buying first a chain of suburban newspapers and then the *Daily Mirror*. Since 1958 John Fairfax and Sons had been publishing three of Sydney's four dailies: to its own *Sydney Morning Herald* had been added in 1953 the *Sun* and all other products of Associated Newspapers, and later the *Daily Mirror* purchased from Ezra Norton. They cheerfully unloaded the *Mirror* on to the bright young man from Adelaide, and old hands wondered about his fate in the jungle of Sydney journalism. They might as well have worried about Tarzan.

Four years later, on 15 July 1964, 250 000 copies of the *Australian*, edited in Canberra, and printed there and in Sydney and Melbourne, were on their way to the newsagents of the nation. 'This is a new kind of newspaper', Murdoch declared, and it was produced by writers and artists who shared his hope that it would be better than all the others. The *Australian* lost Murdoch money as he moved on to other projects in three continents and became, by the 1980s, ruler of the world's largest media empire. In 1972 Murdoch acquired Sir Frank Packer's *Daily Telegraph* in Sydney; ten years later in Brisbane he launched the tabloid *Daily Sun* against the *Courier-Mail*, which was still controlled from Melbourne by his late father's old firm the *Herald* and *Weekly Times*. Murdoch now owned five of the eighteen capital city dailies: the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mirror* in Sydney, the *News* in Adelaide, the *Daily Sun* in Brisbane, and the *Australian*. The *Herald* and *Weekly Times* had expanded its interests since 1939. Then it had controlled the *Sun News-Pictorial* and the *Herald* in Melbourne, in Adelaide the *Advertiser* and the *News* (lost now to Murdoch); by 1970 it had added the *Brisbane Telegraph*, the *Perth Daily News* and *West Australian*, and the *Hobart Mercury*.

The Fairfaxes, whose only capital city daily in 1939 was the *Sydney Morning Herald*, published four more by 1986: from Sydney the *Sun* and the *Australian Financial Review*, in the national capital the *Canberra Times* and in Melbourne the *Age*. The *Canberra Times* was bought in 1964 from the Shakespeare family of Canberra, who had published it since 1928, and who sold in order to give the paper the resources to hold off Murdoch's *Australian*. It was also in 1964 that Oswald Syme, the last surviving son of the *Age*'s founder, stepped down as chairman and his grandson Ranald Macdonald, aged 26, became managing director. The disappearance of the *Argus* in 1957 had helped to keep the *Age* going, but it was not flourishing when Macdonald took over. David Syme's grandchildren, beneficiaries of the Syme trust, were persuaded in 1966 to accept a partnership with the Fairfaxes 'in the cause of maintaining the *Age* as an independent newspaper of high quality and responsibility'. In 1983 the *Age* passed entirely into Fairfax ownership.



The era of Prime Minister Menzies, the Vietnam War, the collapse of the Hobart bridge, the building of the Sydney Opera House, Ms Juno Morosi, the Mount Isa shutdown, fast-bowler Dennis Lillee, devastating bushfires on Ash Wednesday 1983, the winning of the America's Cup, and Prime Minister Hawke.

Rupert Murdoch as King Kong. By 1977 he had bought the daily New York Post and the weeklies New York and Village Voice. In 1982 he acquired the Boston Herald and in 1983 the Chicago Sun-Times. He moved into US film and television and became an American citizen in 1985.



By then a fifth Fairfax generation was in charge of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The Fairfaxes were now the world's oldest press dynasty.

Between them, Murdoch, the Herald and Weekly Times and Fairfax controlled by 1986 all of the eighteen capital city dailies: three ownerships, compared with eleven for the sixteen dailies of 1939. The Packers still prospered, but when Sir Frank Packer died in 1974 the family had no daily papers: he and his sons Clyde and Kerry had decided to concentrate on magazines and television.

In 1971–72 Rupert Murdoch offered readers a national Sunday paper as well as a national daily. The *Sunday Australian* lost heavily, however, and was absorbed into the *Sunday Telegraph* when Murdoch bought that paper, with its daily companion, from Packer. In Sydney Murdoch had also the *Sunday Mirror*, as Ezra Norton had renamed his Sydney *Truth* when giving it a light scrub before selling out to Fairfax in 1958. At first Murdoch let his *Sunday Mirror* pursue an educated readership while the daily version led with 'Body in Sand' and 'Gambler Shot Dead'; but the difference in style between the daily and Sunday papers soon diminished. Advertisers seeking family markets would not use it, even when it was renamed *Sunday* in 1978, and Murdoch shut it down in 1979.

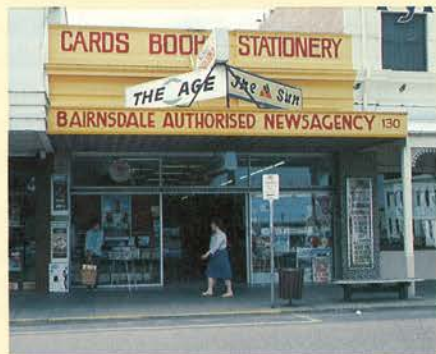
Solid Sunday papers were attempted in Sydney and Perth, but did not last. Fairfax's *Sunday Herald*, started in 1949, was merged with the *Sunday Sun* after three years to form the *Sun-Herald*. It became the best-selling Sunday or daily paper in Australia. In Adelaide the *Sunday Advertiser*, launched in 1953, survived only two years, after which the makers of the morning paper combined with their weekday competitor, Murdoch's News Ltd, to publish the *Sunday Mail*. In Victoria the law changed in 1969 to allow Sunday papers, but the newsagents did not open to sell them. Gordon Barton at once launched the *Sunday Observer* to tempt milk bar customers away from Sunday papers flown in from Sydney; from 1973 the Herald and Weekly Times and David Syme jointly and perfunctorily issued the *Sunday Press* to be sold in the same outlets. None of the eleven Sunday papers published by mid-1986 offered reading as substantial as was available on Sundays in, say, London, Washington or Toronto. Only one paper, the *Canberra Times*, managed a regular daily edition on Sunday; even there, Saturday's offered the better read. The *Australian* encouraged readers to think of the Saturday edition as a two-day paper, prefixing it *Weekend*. A free colour magazine made on American and British lines, the *Good Weekend*, was added to three Fairfax dailies, the *Age* on Friday, the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Saturday, and (briefly) the *Canberra Times* on Sunday.

In 1964 the *Canberra Times* was the first paper to be improved by the coming of the *Australian*. Just before Murdoch's paper was launched, the *Canberra Times* changed its size from tabloid to broadsheet under the editorship of John Pringle, formerly editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and deputy editor in London of the *Sunday Observer*. The paper began to print more news and commentary, and the *Australian* barely dented its circulation (which was largely confined to Canberra). Flying from Canberra to the state capitals though, the *Australian* impressed the makers of other morning papers. It drew on a wider range of sources for foreign news; it used skilful outside contributors; it gave generous space on Saturdays to the arts and book reviews; it looked elegant.

By the end of 1964 the paper's circulation was about 60 000—one-third as many as the *Age*, one-fifth as many as the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and not enough to attract the national advertisers needed to cover costs. Often it arrived late, and during Canberra's frequent fogs the wonder was that it arrived at all; for it was printed in Melbourne and Sydney from matrices flown from Canberra during the night. Facsimile production by coaxial cable replaced the aeroplanes in 1966, and from 1967 the paper was edited and printed in Sydney. With reliable delivery



Cash's newsagency, Main Street, Bairnsdale, c1950; Brian Cash is second from the right. Paperbacks had arrived (left), but the shop still had a lending library, looked after by Irene Leonard (centre). Papers and magazines were sold across a long counter, behind which stationery was stocked. IN PRIVATE POSSESSION



Left. Ceveri's newsagency (formerly Cash's), 1986.

Right. Bob Ceveri's shop is now set out as a self-service market, with some titillating items, unknown in 1939 or 1950, sealed in plastic wraps. Photographs by Bruce Rigby.

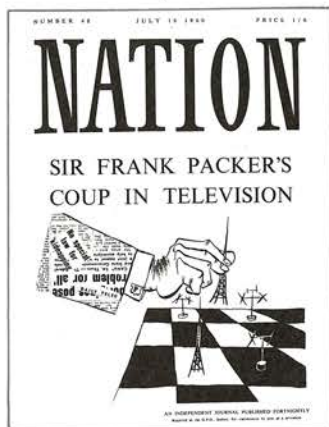
NEWSAGENTS

In 1939, as now, newsagents supplied stationery, including pencils, pens and ink, as well as papers and magazines, although not the wide range of goods and services—paperback books, sweets, lottery tickets, dry cleaning—now commonly offered. On the other hand, many had lending libraries. Bairnsdale, in eastern Victoria, had two newsagents in 1939, as it has now. They sold 1670 daily papers, 2283 weekly and 861 monthly. By the mid-1980s, serving a larger population, Ceveri's and Stow's sold about 3000 dailies and had correspondingly higher periodical sales.

schedules and skilful editing, circulation passed 120 000 by 1969. By that time readers of some other dailies, especially in Sydney and Melbourne, were getting papers both solidier and more enterprising. Pringle returned to the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1965 with a freer hand than previous Fairfax editors; Graham Perkin gave the *Age* from 1966 a vigour it had long lacked.

Two fortnightly essays in intellectual journalism began to appear on alternate weeks in 1958. *Nation* was owned and edited by T.M. Fitzgerald, who was also financial editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*; the *Observer* was edited by Donald Horne, also editor of the chirpy magazine *Weekend* launched by Packer in 1954. *Nation* leaned left-liberal, the *Observer* anarchist-right, but the journals appealed to much the same readership, sharing occasional contributors and even for a while a single Canberra commentator, writing one week in the *Observer* as 'Mugga' and the other in *Nation* as 'Jindivik'. He was actually Ian Fitchett, one of several

An independent view of the media. *Nation*, launched by T.M. Fitzgerald in 1958, was almost alone as a journal that was not controlled by media proprietors. This cover is by Robert Hughes, later art critic in *New York* for *Time* magazine.



journalists whom Fitzgerald and Horne were giving the rare experience of choosing their own subjects and modes of exploring them. *Nation* lasted until 1972, when financial troubles made Fitzgerald sell to Gordon Barton, publisher of the *Review*, which had been launched as the *Sunday Review* in 1970, and which now became the *Nation Review*. The *Sydney Morning Herald* writer Gavin Souter described it as a compound of radicalism, *lèse majesté*, inaccuracy and four-letter words: only the radicalism derived from *Nation*. *Nation Review* changed hands in 1978, came out monthly in 1980, and closed down in 1981.

The *Observer* merged unexpectedly with another weekly in 1961, when Horne found himself editor of the *Bulletin*. After 80 years the famous old paper was selling fewer copies than ever. The war had reprieved it, as families posted 'the Bully' to men whose fathers had been sent it in 1914–18. The demise of its rival *Smith's weekly* in 1950 helped; but for too many people in postwar Australia, reading it was like visiting a dim museum. The owners sold the *Bulletin* (and the *Australian woman's mirror*) to Packer, and 'Australia for the White Man' was hauled down from the masthead after half a century. The new *Bulletin* prospered as a news magazine, eventually incorporating an edition, cover and all, of the *American Newsweek*. In 1985 the *Bulletin* with its free *Newsweek* had a circulation of 123 000. *Newsweek's* model and competitor *Time* appeared from July 1986 in an Australian edition called *Time Australia*, jointly owned by Time Inc and Fairfax.

Fairfax was already publishing one competitor to the *Bulletin*, the *National Times*, announced in 1971 as 'a new weekly newspaper for thinking people'. The paper made its name and circulation mainly through long, mettlesome investigations, by writers some of whom had come to journalism by unconventional routes: Evan Whitton after teaching English, Anne Summers after writing her feminist history of women in Australia, *Damned whores and God's police*. Later, the comic talents of Patrick Cook for visual fantasy and verbal nihilism held some readers, deprived of *Nation* and *Nation Review*, to whom the paper's campaigns were apt to appear windy vendettas and its preoccupation with money boring or distasteful. In 1980 the *National Times* offered more business than ever, by including a weekly magazine, *Business review*. This was soon published separately as *Business review weekly*, competing with the Packer fortnightly, *Australian business*. The market for financial journalism was now brisk. The *National Times* itself was not flourishing. Circulation, once over 100 000, was only 74 000 when the paper closed down as a tabloid coming out on Friday, and was re-launched in August 1986 as a broadsheet, the *Times on Sunday*.

Popular weeklies proved vulnerable to television. *Pix* survived after passing to Fairfax in 1953 and merging with the fortnightly *People* in 1972. Like the *Australasian post*, launched in 1946 to replace the *Australasian*, old weekly companion to the Melbourne *Argus*, *Pix-People* relied on increasing rations of female flesh. Packer's *Weekend* merged with the *Australian woman's mirror* as *Everybody's mirror*, then closed as *Everybody's* in 1962. The most successful new popular weekly was Murdoch's *TV week*, serving the new medium which was undermining traditional magazines. The old radio weeklies either folded or adapted, the *Listener in* becoming first *Listener-in TV*, then *Scene*. The ABC closed down its *ABC weekly* in 1959, produced until 1980 a *TV times* in partnership with Packer, and was associated in 1984 with the short-lived production of the monthly *Look and listen*.

Weekly women's magazines weathered challenges from television and then from feminism. The *Herald* and *Weekly Times* began a new one, *Woman's day* (at first fortnightly) in 1948. The newcomer had not achieved half the *Women's weekly's* circulation by 1956, when the Fairfaxes bought and merged it with

Woman, acquired with Associated Newspapers in 1953. In the mid-1970s *Woman's day* was passed in circulation by Murdoch's *New idea*. The *Australian women's weekly* stayed out in front. How? Keith Windschuttle found it offering in 1982, in order of prominence, celebrities, fashion, babies and children, home decorating, food, fiction, exercise and travel.

When Packer died in 1974 his *Weekly* had a circulation of more than 800 000—still leading the field, but having gained only 100 000 since 1946 while the population almost doubled; and it was having financial problems. Kerry Packer, the inheritor, made three bold changes: reducing the page size in 1975 to economise on newsprint; making it square-backed and glossy in 1979 to give advertisers a lustre comparable with colour television (introduced in 1975); and in 1982 defying tradition and language by bringing the *Women's weekly* out monthly.

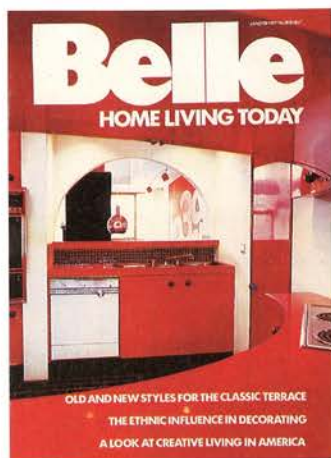
New monthlies from the Packer and Fairfax organisations sailed faster than their weeklies before the winds of change. Sir Frank Packer did not much like the style of *Cleo*, created in 1972 and offering to tell women what turned a man on and everything they didn't know about contraception. What did John Fairfax's descendants think when their monthly *Cosmopolitan*, launched in 1973, gave women advice on masturbation, or on accommodating an unusually large penis? Perhaps it was enough that by 1982 it was bought by 173 000 people, most of them women between eighteen and 40 whom advertisers would pay to reach.

The Weekly monthly. By September 1985 circulation was 1 140 000. The Packer organisation paid a lot of money—\$250 000 was mentioned—for exclusive print and television rights to the Chamberlains' story. Lindy Chamberlain was found guilty of infanticide, spent three years in gaol, but still maintained that a dingo took baby Azaria from their tent near Ayers Rock in 1980.

The Australian Women's Weekly
\$1.80
New Zealand \$2.40
MARCH, 1985

WORLD EXCLUSIVE
Extraordinary interview
LINDY CHAMBERLAIN
speaking freely for the first time
strong... talkative... passionate— what the public
doesn't know of her nightmare years

The Australian Women's Weekly
MARCH ISSUE
OUT NOW



'The King', 28 July 1973. Graham Kennedy's talk-and-variety show, In Melbourne tonight, copied from the USA, was one of the most popular Australian-made programs in the first twenty years of commercial television. Sir Frank Packer owned both the Bulletin and GTV 9, the station on which Kennedy appeared.

antagonises FH

Most new magazines were monthlies for special markets. *Dolly*, *Belle* and *Pol* (all started by Fairfax) were aimed at overlapping age-groups of women between sixteen and 30, and *Vogue Australia* and *Mode* at smart women over 25. The Herald and Weekly Times offered housewives *Australian family circle*, and Fairfax offered *Good housekeeping*. In the homemaking field the old Australian monthlies looked dowdy alongside glossy newcomers such as Packer's *Australian house and garden*. The *Australian home journal* ceased publication in 1982 after nearly 90 years. The *Australian home beautiful* was still produced by the Herald and Weekly Times, which now also published *Better homes and gardens* and *Your garden*. *Man* closed down in 1974, unable to keep up, or down, with the American *Playboy* and *Penthouse*.

The most successful local version of an overseas monthly was the old *Reader's digest*, whose Australian edition, begun in 1946, fought off the local imitators. Among providers of monthly *Australiana*, *Wild life* stopped publication in 1954, as did the *Australian journal* in 1962, while *Walkabout*, after stops and starts, finally disappeared in 1974. New publications appeared about fishing, sailing, motoring, microwave cooking, computing, and any other activity that appealed to enough enthusiasts to attract advertisers.

The first television program in Australia, on 16 September 1956, came from a Sydney station owned by Frank Packer: 30 years later his son Kerry owned stations in both Sydney and Melbourne. Television attracted newspaper proprietors more strongly than radio. In the wrong hands it could do greater damage to their interests; and for many years, at least, the stations would be much less numerous: in a field with room for few entrepreneurs the press men fought hard for their place.

In 1953-54 the Menzies government legislated for the dual system, commercial and national, that existed already for radio. Menzies rejected an arrangement like Britain's, whereby the transmitters used by commercial operators were publicly owned and leased to a series of program suppliers. Such a model could have given Australia both more diversity of programs and more public accountability from their providers. By the time Labor returned to office in 1972, the arrangements sanctioned by Menzies were too deeply entrenched to be amended without turning every media outlet owned by the threatened interests into a crusader for Labor's destruction.

A supposedly autonomous Australian Broadcasting Control Board advised the government who should have commercial television licences. When the board proposed in 1958 only one licence for Brisbane and one for Adelaide, on the ground that two struggling stations would concentrate on ratings instead of quality, Menzies' cabinet gave two in each city. They did so in response to lobbying from the companies already running stations in Sydney and Melbourne, who wanted partners in the smaller cities for the networking of programs, a practice of which the board disapproved. Of the eight television stations thus licensed by 1960, the Herald and Weekly Times owned three, Packer two, and Fairfax and Rupert Murdoch one each.

Trading in licences went on almost unchecked by official proclamations against it. Murdoch bought and sold a station in Wollongong, bought one in Sydney and sold one in Melbourne. In 1977 the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal replaced the Control Board after an official inquiry which yielded concern about 'undue concentration' of television ownership. The tribunal appeared to have more authority than its predecessor; but when in 1980 it blocked Murdoch's takeover of ATV-0 Melbourne on the ground that it was not in the public interest to let him control more stations than he had already, the Fraser government legislated to define public interest so narrowly that the acquisition became legitimate.

By mid-1986 Australia had 50 commercial television stations. The six in Sydney and Melbourne, reaching nearly 40 per cent of the population, were owned by the same four firms that owned all the metropolitan daily newspapers. Murdoch and Packer controlled two each, Fairfax and the Herald and Weekly Times one each; the Herald and Weekly Times also controlled a station in Adelaide and shared an interest with Fairfax in Brisbane. Networking arrangements between and beyond commonly controlled stations were revealed in 1980 to be more extensive than the participants admitted. Most viewers in 1985 had a choice between one, two or three commercial programs, as well as one from the ABC, and one from the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS).

Any decade was a torrid time for the ABC, but the last had been unusually arduous. The national broadcaster had been treated by the Whitlam government with a generosity not surprising when Labor politicians were in charge of the only alternative to the commercial media. From 1976 the Fraser government made punishing reductions in ABC revenue. Then a review committee under a businessman, Alex Dix, advised substantial changes in management and strategy. The incoming Hawke government acted on much of Dix's advice, including reconstitution of the 'commission' as a 'corporation', and there was disappointment among both producers and consumers of ABC programs when the changes did not bring quick yields. Worse, Labor politicians in office now treated the ABC hardly better than their opponents had done.

At first the ABC missed its chance to provide television programs for the multicultural Australia that was being proclaimed in the 1970s, responding so sluggishly to approaches from the federal government, that Malcolm Fraser promised at the election of 1977 to set up a separate agency for non-Anglo-Celtic Australians, the Special Broadcasting Service. Then in August 1986 the Hawke government, in what was hoped to be a cost-cutting exercise, resolved to merge the SBS with the ABC. This decision was deplored so vigorously in lobbying from ethnic communities that Hawke, fearing electoral damage, reversed it in April 1987.

American English was heard more on television than on radio—on the ABC as well as the commercial channels—as the greater expense of the new medium dictated a higher proportion of imported programs. The ABC tended to take more from Britain, having first rights to BBC material. The commercials offered local imitations of American chat-and-variety shows and quizzes. At first the ABC gave more resources to news, current affairs and sport; then the commercials learned how to deliver news as spectacle, engaged people who had learned the job at the ABC to put on current affairs, and discovered that coaxial cable and satellite, colour and action replay made sport a goldmine.

By the 1980s the largest single program category was drama, including films, which took up more than half of all commercial television time and one-third of the ABC's. Much was locally produced: the commercials had responded to a popular taste for representation of Australian life, much of it soap operatic, some—as in the mini-series *The dismissal* (about the end of the Whitlam government), *The last bastion* (about politics and strategy during World War II) and *Vietnam*—ambitious enough to have been at home on the ABC, if only the impoverished national broadcaster had been able to afford them. The ABC offered a range of programs never seen on the commercials: opera, ballet, and documentary series on the arts, biology, natural history. On the other hand it was the ABC and not a commercial channel that put on *Countdown*, a glittering, frenzied revelation of the week's top pop groups.

On SBS, solid news and current affairs programs, often produced and presented

'ABC BASHING ... THE NEW LIBERALISM?'

On 30 November 1976 Gough Whitlam, leader of the Opposition, addresses a lunchtime rally of protest against a bill enabling Malcolm Fraser's government to remove all the ABC commissioners appointed by the Whitlam ministry (1972-75). After this and other demonstrations and lobbying of Liberal backbenchers, the proposal was dropped.

FAIRFAX PHOTO LIBRARY





Sixty Minutes (left), was produced for Kerry Packer and derived from CBS in the USA. Here, in 1980, with executive producer Gerald Stone, are reporters George Negus, Ray Martin and Ian Leslie. This day tonight (above), the ABC's trail-blazing daily current affairs program, was presented from 1967 to 1974 by Bill Peach, shown here after his last night with: (from left) Paul Murphy, Peach, June Heffron, Tony Joyce and Peter Luck.

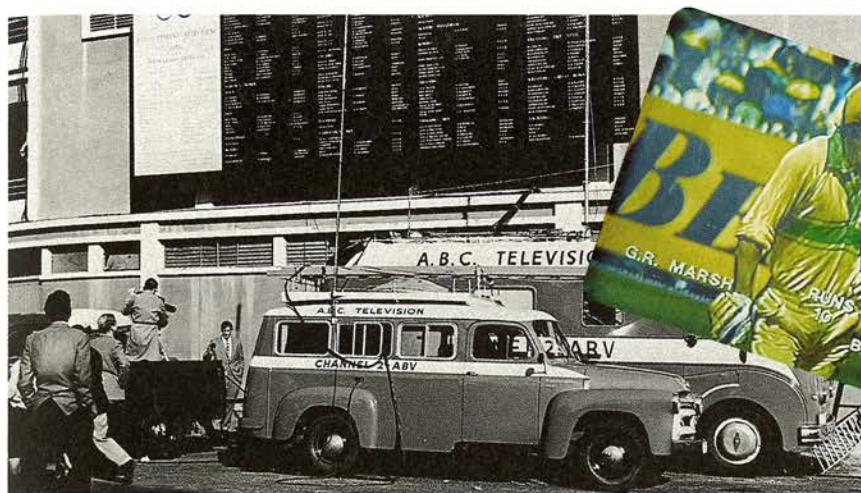
ABC DOCUMENT ARCHIVES
 GEORGE DONIKIAN PRESENTS WORLD NEWS ON SBS TELEVISION, 1983.
 AUSTRALIAN INFORMATION SERVICE



Men from Homicide (above), a commercial program made by Crawford Productions, 1964–1978. The program starred (from left) Jack Fegan, Les Dayman, Leonard Teale and George Mallaby. Another commercial television success was Bob Dyer's Pick a box (right), which ran from 1957 to 1971. A quiz show, it made contestant Barry Jones (in 1987 federal minister for science) a household name, voice and face.

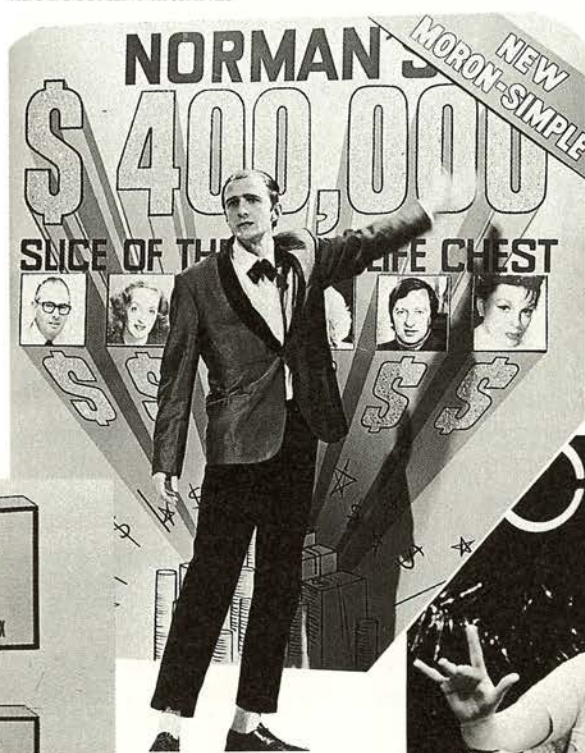
ABC DOCUMENT ARCHIVES





Sport on commercial television. Kerry Packer, denied exclusive rights to test cricket, created international teams of his own in 1977 to play 'world series' matches. Eventually he made cricket administrators play the game his way, giving his network exclusive rights to both test series and one-day encounters. In old-style cricket and new, overs have been reduced from eight balls to six, allowing a one-third increase in advertisements between them. Here Australia (gold and green) bats against India in a one-day match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on 31 January 1986. Photograph by Bruce Rigby.

The Norman Gunston show, with Garry McDonald (below), began on the ABC in 1975, evolving out of The Aunty Jack show (right), which starred (from left) Sandra MacGregor, McDonald, Grahame Bond ('Aunty Jack') and Rory O'Donoghue. ABC DOCUMENT ARCHIVES



Right. Ian ('Molly') Meldrum (right), host of the ABC program Countdown, launched in 1974 and watched by two million people, with 'Debbie' (Mary Kenneally) and 'Tim' (Steven Blackburn), 1984. ABC DOCUMENT ARCHIVES



by former ABC staff but also by people with such names as Sobhini Sinnatanby, George Donikian and Christina Koutsoukos, shared the screen with drama and documentaries from west and east. ABC and SBS television had so far no advertisements, though the Hawke government was thinking about introducing them. The volume and spacing of advertisements on commercial stations astonished visitors from almost everywhere except the USA. At first they were allowed up to eight minutes an hour; by 1986 the ration was eleven minutes, and advertisers were lobbying for more.

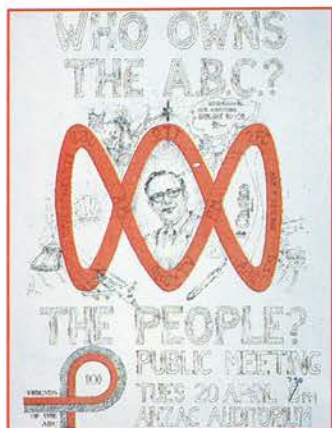
By the simple test of 'ratings'—who watched what—the commercial stations were always ahead of the ABC, and SBS attracted tiny minorities. In 1986 nearly every household had television, and used it for an average of 32 hours a week, thus spending more time viewing than doing anything else except sleeping and working. In most houses, most of the time, the station on the screen was commercial. By 1986 more than 40 per cent of households also had a videocassette recorder, and 'zapping'—pressing the fast-forward button during commercials in recorded programs—had come to concern television advertisers more than any other issue since ratings began.

Cable television was the next threat to established commercial interests, unless they could control it. Cable might supply services to minorities of viewers, rather as the new monthly specialist magazines served different groups of readers, or might deliver only first-run movies and big sport. But the potential beneficiaries did not form a powerful interest; and politicians, lobbied against cable by suppliers of 'free' television, were content to defer the novelty.

One of the politicians' worries was the satellite put into stationary orbit for Australian use by an American space shuttle in 1985. Malcolm Fraser was persuaded by Kerry Packer that a domestic satellite could give rural people as wide a choice of television programs as was now available in the largest cities, and that it should have 49 per cent private ownership. The Hawke government resolved on 100 per cent public ownership—75 per cent directly by government, 25 per cent by Telecom, the statutory authority supplying public telecommunications. Should the television networks of Melbourne and Sydney be allowed to send their programs, advertisements and all, Australia-wide, by Aussat? Should the interests of independently owned regional television stations be somehow protected? While the government pondered, the capacity of a device costing hundreds of millions of dollars of public money remained largely unused as it sent ABC television and radio programs to 300 000 people in remote areas.

Television had not driven out the older medium. Australia in the 1980s had, as never in the days before television, more radios than people. The number of commercial radio stations on the medium wave or AM band had increased to 130. There were also a growing number of 'public broadcasting' stations, and Melbourne and Sydney had 'ethnic' stations operated by SBS. AM stations transmitting ABC programs were not much more numerous than in 1939. But on the previously unused FM band, where very high frequencies delivered sounds of greater fidelity (though over shorter distances), the ABC had been given since 1976 a whole new network of transmitters, while in Melbourne and Sydney, subscribers to non-commercial music stations had their own FM programs and an increasing number of commercial operators were also heard on FM. By 1986 the new commercial FM stations scored higher ratings than AM stations in every state capital except Melbourne.

Just when the television set was taking over the living rooms, the transistor made the radio receiver so small, cheap and portable that it became an extension of the self. At the same time a new kind of popular music arrived, directed at a newly



Advertising on the ABC? The Dix review committee recommended in 1981 that 'corporate underwriting' of programs be sought to raise revenue, after the ABC itself had proposed the change. The phrase, which originated in US public broadcasting, was meant to exclude promotion of particular products, allowing only announcements that a company had given money for a program. Staff groups within the ABC opposed it, and so did the Friends of the ABC, a citizens' group formed in Sydney when the Fraser government imposed budget cuts in 1976. The Friends here imagine newsreader James Dibble naming a variety of sponsors. Poster by Dick Grosser, 1976.
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL GALLERY

named group, teenagers. By 1967 cables carried voices reliably across the world, making possible more vivid news bulletins, and the federal authorities allowed the broadcasting of telephone conversations, enabling the American fashion for talkback sessions to take on. By 1980 the average commercial radio station gave 58 per cent of its time to music, 14 per cent to advertising, 9 per cent to news, 7 per cent to information and service announcements, 6 per cent to sport and 6 per cent



Federal parliament on ABC air in early 1950s. R.G. Menzies as prime minister addresses not only the House of Representatives but the nation. The petrified forest of microphones, in Menzies' phrase, was installed by order of parliament in 1946. On the first night W.M. Hughes, in the House since 1901, caught the Speaker's eye at 8 o'clock, when the radio gallery was known to be most crowded, and the ABC transmitted not only his voice but squeaks from his hearing aid. In early days one Labor member, Rowley James, sent a message to his dentist in Newcastle: 'Milton, get my teeth ready this weekend.' J.D.B. Miller judged after three years that broadcasting had done some good. 'Speeches are now judged by a wider audience than ever before; backbenchers have a better chance of reaching the public ear; ministers cannot rely upon the look of their statements in the newspapers.' The ABC's general manager Charles Moses thought that broadcasting forced the papers to report parliament more accurately. However, it did terrible damage to ABC program schedules for 40 years. There was no powerful reason why parliament should not be broadcast on a separate frequency, except the politicians' fear that few people would listen.

AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

to other matter. The figures concealed much variety of 'format'. Pursuing the local advertisers on whom commercial radio depended now that national advertisers had gone to television, station managers would put on 'bubblegum music' for young consumers, 'mellow rock' or 'memorable foot-tappers' for the more mature, and news-and-talk, so they hoped, for everybody. Commercial music was never classical now and commercial voices were Austral-American, educated Australian or Ocker, hardly ever English or Anglo-Australian.

Ownership of radio stations was more diverse than that of television channels.

Commercial radio, 1983. A 3KZ disc jockey spins records, talks, and wears a t-shirt identifying the station with Melbourne and its trams.

AUSTRALIAN INFORMATION SERVICE



There were more of them; and the regulations discouraging concentration were more effective, partly because they were less coveted by the big proprietors. Murdoch showed little interest, though owning a record company which supplied radio music. Fairfax owned the six stations of the Macquarie network, the Herald and Weekly Times owned nine stations in four states, and Packer stayed out of radio until 1986, when he purchased 2UE in Sydney, hoping to make it the nucleus of a national network.

The ABC's stations on the AM band were arranged in three networks, 'light', 'serious' and 'regional'. Announcers now had names. Since the late 1940s the proportion of Australian voices had risen slowly. The most proficient of them read the news bulletins, which had been created since 1947 by an independent news service, required by an act of the Chifley government to do its own gathering. Classical music, recorded and live, was a staple of the second network. Sport flourished on the first. In fields other than news and sport the spoken word had changed its sound. The formal 'talk' was almost extinct except for Alistair Cooke's *Letter from America*. On the current affairs programs *AM* from 1967 and *PM* from 1969, newsmakers at home and abroad replied to questions without notice from interviewers. In the evening conversations, documentaries and readings more spacious and searching than any heard in 1939 occupied the second network, sometimes with a radicalism or irreverence which provoked momentary uproar in the papers and concern at board meetings. *The science show* made intricate issues vividly clear to a lay audience; *The coming out show* advanced the new feminism. 'Light entertainment' disappeared as a program category, and with it ABC dance bands and live 'variety'. Comedy was represented regularly only by perennial replays of the BBC's *Goon show*. The Argonauts hung up their oars; neither the ABC nor the commercials could find a radio audience for children's programs in the age of television.

Words came to occupy more time on the ABC's second network, music less, as the FM network providing mainly 'fine music' spread. By 1987 almost 90 per cent of the population could pick up its high fidelity and stereophonic sound. In Sydney a place in the FM band was also occupied by 2JJJ, a rock station representing an unusually confident approach to young people. For the most part the music played on the light network was kept a decorous distance behind the commercials', and rarely attracted an audience as large as theirs.

'Public broadcasting' stations were a creation of the Whitlam government. By 1987 there were nearly 60 of them, run on the cheap, trying to bridge the gap between amateur and professional use of the air, and representing, in the view of one senior ABC man, the cutting edge of radio. The ethnic radio stations 2EA and 3EA, conducted by the SBS and giving programs in many migrants' languages, might or might not become the nucleus of a national network. Some Aborigines were beginning to hear their own languages on a commercial station in Alice Springs, while Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were broadcasting English-language programs from a station on Thursday Island.

Broadcasting is intrinsically more political than print, and advancing technology ensures that the 'electronic state', as Trevor Barr calls it, will deeply concern all politicians. In a liberal democracy anybody with the money can start a paper; but regulation is unavoidable in broadcasting, if only to prevent broadcasters from jamming one another. In Australia, television licences are so few, and possession of them so lucrative, that owners and would-be owners have powerful reason to be on close terms with the regulators. The old-style newspaper proprietor was almost always anti-Labor. The man with stakes in both press and television may judge it prudent to back winners. Murdoch supported Whitlam in 1972, Fraser in 1975,



The Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) commenced broadcasting in 1980 on public station 8CCC-FM (Alice Springs), and also made a weekly program in three local Aboriginal languages for the ABC. The Australian Broadcasting Tribunal granted CAAMA a licence in 1984. CAAMA was by then using four Aboriginal languages and English, and was lobbying for the use of the AUSSAT satellite system to broadcast television programs in Aboriginal languages.

REDBACK GRAPHIX

1977 and 1980, and made contact with Labor leaders on the eve of their victory in 1983. Later that year Murdoch spoke of Fraser as 'the poor chap' and of Hawke having had 'a brilliant start'. The current affairs programs on Kerry Packer's television stations were politically even-handed as his father's newspapers had never been. The decline of a special regard for the ABC among Labor leaders may well be connected with their ease of friendly access to commercial cameras.

Media proprietors everywhere are people who value power even more than wealth, power to affect awareness, taste, judgment and votes. In twentieth-century Australia they have made it harder for the Labor party to gain office. Looking around in the 1960s, a pessimistic radical might have said they had made it virtually impossible. The view from 1987 would be more cheerful, unless the observer judged that Labor politicians won government only by abandoning their old commitment to redistribute wealth, and that the mass media had helped persuade them to do so.

One form of power that proprietors clearly enjoy is the power to tell editors, producers and other subordinates what to do. One whole issue of the *Bulletin*, for 9 February 1967, was pulped when Sir Frank Packer disapproved an editorial and cartoon hostile to a hanging in Victoria. Rupert Murdoch became famous throughout the English-speaking world for removing editors who thought they had his confidence. During the constitutional crisis and election campaign of late 1975, Murdoch had his papers serve up the news in a manner so hostile to Labor that 75 journalists on the *Australian* declared they could not be loyal to a propaganda sheet.

John Fairfax and Sons assured its journalists at this convulsive time that no bias would be permitted in news pages, and actually advertised to attract readers of Murdoch papers who had found their reporting unfair to Labor. When Sir Warwick Fairfax intervened in the editing of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, as he did from time to time as chairman of directors, it was normally on matters of editorial tone. John Pringle's second term as editor, from 1965 to 1969, ended after friction over mildly progressive references to the monarchy, film censorship, private education and Easter, all of which troubled Fairfax as custodian of tradition.

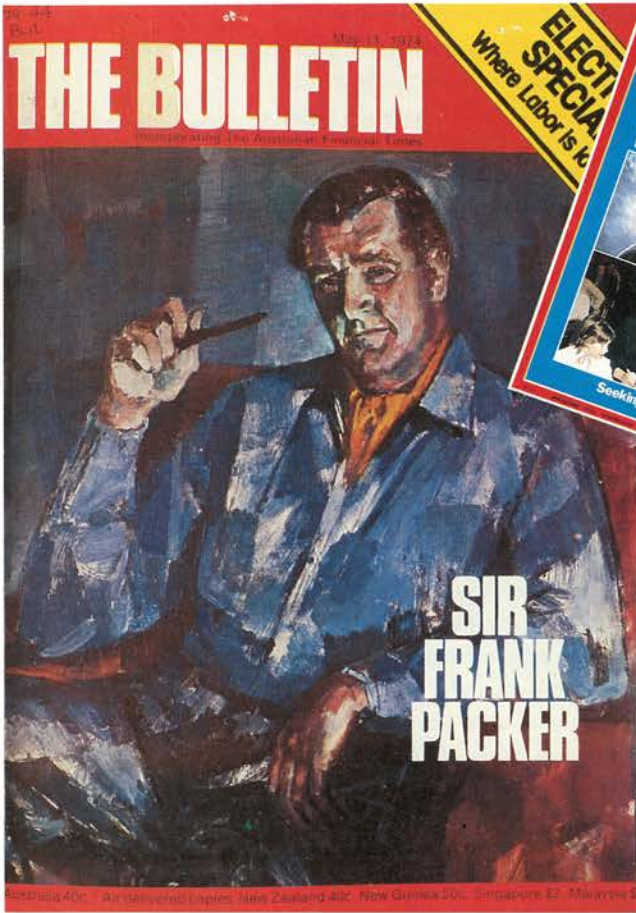
On the relation between proprietor and manager in television, or proprietor and producer, there are only scraps of public knowledge. When an unusually authoritarian chairman of the ABC, Sir Henry Bland, was enduring hostile comment in 1976 for taking a program off the air, he had private messages of congratulation from Kerry Packer and Rupert Murdoch. Kerry Packer refused to allow the screening of a program made for his network's *Sunday*, which explored whether an editor would publish allegations implicating his proprietor in criminal conduct. Denis O'Brien, writing a television review for Sir Frank Packer's *Sunday Telegraph*, never knew how it would be altered or whether it would appear at all. No Australian paper whose owners had television interests could be trusted to print disinterested judgments on the medium. That fact alone, it might be argued, indicts the policy of letting them in.

Serious criticism of the media between 1939 and 1988 falls into two exact halves, before and after the publication of *The press in Australia* by the political scientist Henry Mayer in 1964. Before Mayer, left-wing reformers had tended to convict the press of crimes attributable to its capitalist ownership and to call for public initiatives without considering either the evidence about the state of the press in supposedly socialist countries or the obstacles to freedom in any plan for government intervention. Mayer's was the first thorough study of the subject. He judged the press less severely than he judged its critics. The critical minority, he said, including himself, would have to recognise that their irritations and at times

Top newspaperwoman, Ita Buttrose, was appointed editor of the Australian women's weekly in 1975 and of all the Packer publications for women in 1977. In 1981 she was appointed editor-in-chief of Rupert Murdoch's papers, the Sydney Daily Telegraph and Sunday Telegraph. She was the first Australian woman to edit either a daily or a Sunday paper.

FAIRFAX PHOTO LIBRARY





Left. The Bulletin mourns its owner, 1974.



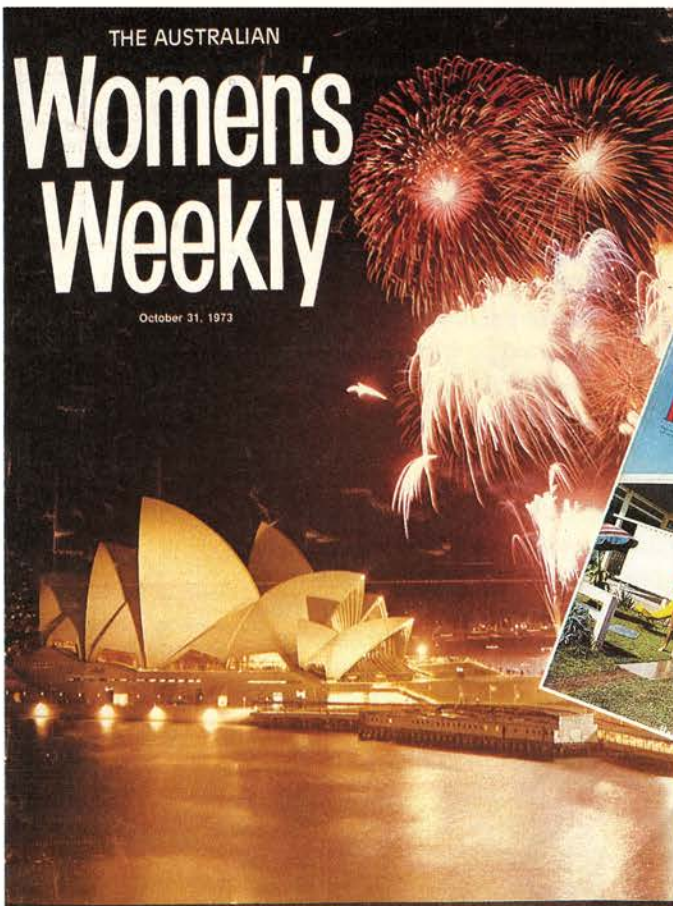
First issue of Time Australia, 21 July 1986.



First issue of the Australasian Post, 11 Apr 1946.



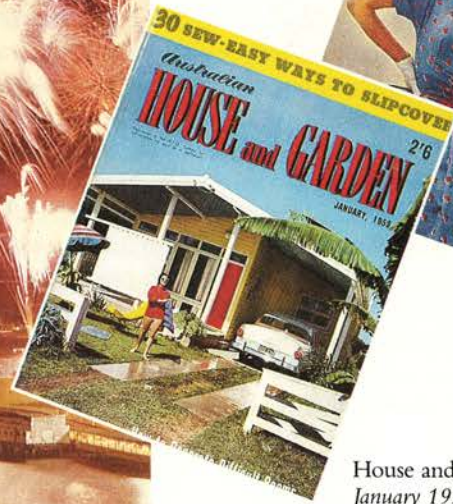
Man, January 1939.



One monument greets another. The 40-year-old prodigy of Australian publishing welcomes one of the wonders of the modern world, 31 Oct 1973.



New idea, 1 Feb 1961.

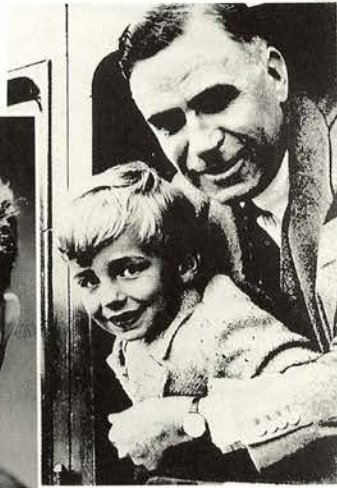


House and garden, January 1959.

Warwick Fairfax, 1944.
FAIRFAX PHOTO LIBRARY



Sir Keith Murdoch and his son Rupert.



Sir Frank Packer.

Ronald Macdonald, 1982.



Kerry Stokes
CTC7 Canberra
ADST Adelaide
WCW10 Perth licence
6PM Perth
3DB Melb
3GL Geelong
5AD Adelaide
SSE
Mt Gambier

Robert Holmes à Court
TVW7 Perth
SAS10 Adelaide
6IX Perth
6WB Katanning
6BY Bridgetown
6VA Albany
Western Mail Perth
Four suburban weeklies
Albany Advertiser
Great Southern
Herald Katanning
Overseas Trading

Alan Bond
TCN9 Sydney
GTV9 Melbourne
QTQ9 Brisbane
STW9 Perth
3AK Melbourne
2UE Sydney
6PM Perth
8DN Darwin
6KA Karratha
6GE Geraldton (55%)
6KG Kalgoorlie
6AM Northam
6NW Port Hedland
PBL Marketing
Sky Channel
Intelsat
National Nine
Network satellite (85%)
30 Watt transponder

John Fairfax
ATN7 Sydney
HSV7 Melbourne
BTQ7 Brisbane
Macquarie Network: 2GB, 3AW, 4BH, 5DN, 2CA, 2WL, FM104 (49.8%) & 4AY SMH
The Sun
The Sun-Herald
Financial Review
Times on Sunday
The Age Melb
Canberra Times
Newcastle Herald
Iwarrwa Mercury
10 C'nity papers
33 NSW regionals
24 Vic. regionals and suburban Magazines incl. Cosmopolitan, Dolly & Woman's Day; BRW, Personal Investment
Rydge magazines

Nthn Star Holdings / Westfield Capital Corp
TEN10 Sydney
ATV10 Melb
NRN11 Grafton/Kempsey
RTN8 Lismore
2LM Lismore
2MW Gold Coast/Tweed (32.2%)
4BK Brisbane
4AK Toowoomba/Darling Downs
4AM Mareeba
Daily Sun Bris
Sunday Sun Bris
The News Adelaide
8 North Coast regional publications
Festival Records

News Ltd
Daily Telegraph
Sunday Telegraph
Daily Mirror
The Australian
Progress Press
Eight suburbans
Herald Melb
Sun-News Pic
Weekly Times
Sporting Globe
Sunday Press (50% with Syme)
Australasian Post
Home Beautiful & other magazines
Gordon & Gotch
Crawford Prod.
Salmat Direct
Marketing
Courier Mail Bris
Telegraph Bris
Sunday Mail Bris
Advertiser Adel.
Sunday Mail Adel.
West Australian
Daily News WA
Sunday Times WA
The Mercury Tas
Sunday Tasmanian
NT News
Sunday Territorian

Kerry Packer
15 magazines including the Australian Women's Weekly, The Bulletin, Australian Business, Cleo and Belle.

The media chiefs: from left, Kerry Stokes, Robert Holmes à Court, Alan Bond, Greg Gardiner of John Fairfax, David Gonski of Northern Star, Neil Walford of News Ltd and Kerry Packer. Sydney Morning Herald, Tuesday 10 Feb 1987.



disgust with Australian papers were part of the price they paid for living in the sort of society Australia had.

A Press Council, modelled on a British example and scorned in advance by Mayer, was formed in 1976. Its mild adjudications on complaints were printed well inside the papers of member organisations. More drastic criticisms of the media were published in the monthly *Australian society*. David Bowman's essays in that journal offered, from a vantage point of a troubled liberal who had spent his working life in newspapers, the most sustained scrutiny since Mayer's.

Pessimistic about the prospects for change in deeply entrenched arrangements, media reformers urged politicians to be more alert custodians of the people's interests in making decisions about the future of electronic media: specifically not to sell Aussat or let it enhance existing monopolies; to require any operator of the proposed cable television to provide outlets for community broadcasting, children and education; to make future licence-holders share a channel rather than letting one operate it continuously.

The reformers also counted blessings. The ABC; the SBS; the character of Packer's current affairs program *Sunday*; the increasing opportunities for women outside the field of women's papers; the quality of the best three or four dailies, which gave more news than ever from overseas (though too much refracted through Britain and the USA), and offered commendably analytic reporting of politics. Keith Windschuttle, differing from other critics on the left, even argued

that despite ruling class ownership and control, the content of the media is *not* filled by one dominant ruling class ideology but that market forces push a large volume of working class culture on to its pages and screens.

Media students wondered whether the old original medium, the newspaper, was in danger. Research by Murray Goot showed a steady but not catastrophic fall in newspaper circulation after the mid-1950s. Goot warned against attributing the decline to television, since it began before television and was not accentuated by the coming of colour. Windschuttle judged television to be *one* important cause of the decline of the press as a popular medium. The motor car was another, reducing the number of people who read on public transport. The new multiculturalism also contributed, as migrants less prone than British or Australian-born people to take newspapers in their first homeland did not buy them in the foreign language of their second.

If the electronic estate endangered newspapers, it also helped their makers to produce them more efficiently. One by one from the late 1970s they were abandoning metal type and the compositors who set it, and giving visual display terminals instead of typewriters to journalists and to telephone operators who took classified advertisements. These changes saved money. When they provoked strikes, new technologies also made it easier for managers to bring out attractive papers with substitute labour.

The contents and style of newspapers themselves were changed to meet readers' and advertisers' imagined or market-researched wants. News was delivered as spectacle, for a population now used to seeing it happen on television. The newspaper tended to become a daily magazine, for readers who were presumed to have got the day's news first from television or radio.

Owners protected themselves against the possible atrophy of print, by diversifying their investments. The Herald and Weekly Times bought property, Packer bought property and minerals, Packer and Murdoch participated jointly in Lotto, Murdoch added oil and gas exploration to his prodigious activities. Fairfax, though having interests in property, newsprint and Muzak, diversified less than the others.



The media controllers. Malcolm Fraser, prime minister, as seen by Age cartoonist Ron Tandberg, expresses pleasure to his deputy John Howard at the failure of an attempt to take over the Herald and Weekly Times group. The five telephone calls imagined would be to Kerry Packer, Rupert Murdoch, and the corporate heads of John Fairfax, David Syme and the Herald and Weekly Times. Tandberg's age of consensus, Melbourne 1984.

The firm remained above all custodian of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which would be 146 years old in 1988. Granny, as the paper had been known since at least 1848, was no stranger to change. Since 1939 its pages had been opened to cartoons and comics and crosswords, and by 1987 regional editions were prepared for different parts of the city. After 60 years of radio and 30 of television, Australia's oldest paper did not appear to represent an endangered species.

Whether it remained a Fairfax enterprise was less certain. Early in 1987 Rupert Murdoch bought control of the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd, his father's old firm. He had become a citizen of the USA in order to comply with American rules about ownership, and that had helped him become the largest media proprietor in the world; but he had not lost interest in his native land. Murdoch wanted to acquire the company's newspapers, not its television stations or other interests; indeed, he sold off his own two television stations as well as the two he was acquiring. Fairfax picked up one station in Melbourne; the Western Australian entrepreneur, Kerry Stokes, added one in Adelaide to the stations he already owned in Canberra and Perth; and Westfield Capital Corporation Ltd, a newly formed investment company, bought one in Melbourne and one in Sydney. And as that was happening, Kerry Packer sold all his broadcasting interests to the Western Australian business man Alan Bond. When asked why, he said simply that a thousand million dollars was too much to refuse.

Of the eighteen capital daily newspapers, Murdoch now controlled nine, with well over half the total circulation. Momentarily he appeared to have 13, but in what was being described as his fire sale Murdoch disposed of the *West Australian* and *Perth Daily News*, the *Brisbane Daily Sun* and *Adelaide News*. Fairfax owned the remaining five: two in Sydney, one in Melbourne, one in Canberra and the national *Australian Financial Review*. A Rip Van Winkle from 1939 would have been astonished to hear so little public debate about these events, and puzzled to hear who was saying what. Bob Hawke was untroubled, and it was Malcolm Fraser who warned Australians to be frightened by such concentration of ownership.

So, on the eve of the bicentennial year, one man, Rupert Murdoch, had unprecedented control of the press, and commercial television was dominated by three owners—Fairfax, and two newcomers who bought instruments of communication as investments like any other. As Westfield Capital Corporation swallowed Murdoch's television stations in Sydney and Melbourne its chairman, David Gonski, said: 'We have been looking for a cash flow business, and there is good cash flow in television ...' Alan Bond had previously taken over the Swan Brewery, and in buying out Packer he judged that his company had 'outstanding prospects for achieving the same success in electronic media as it had in brewing'.

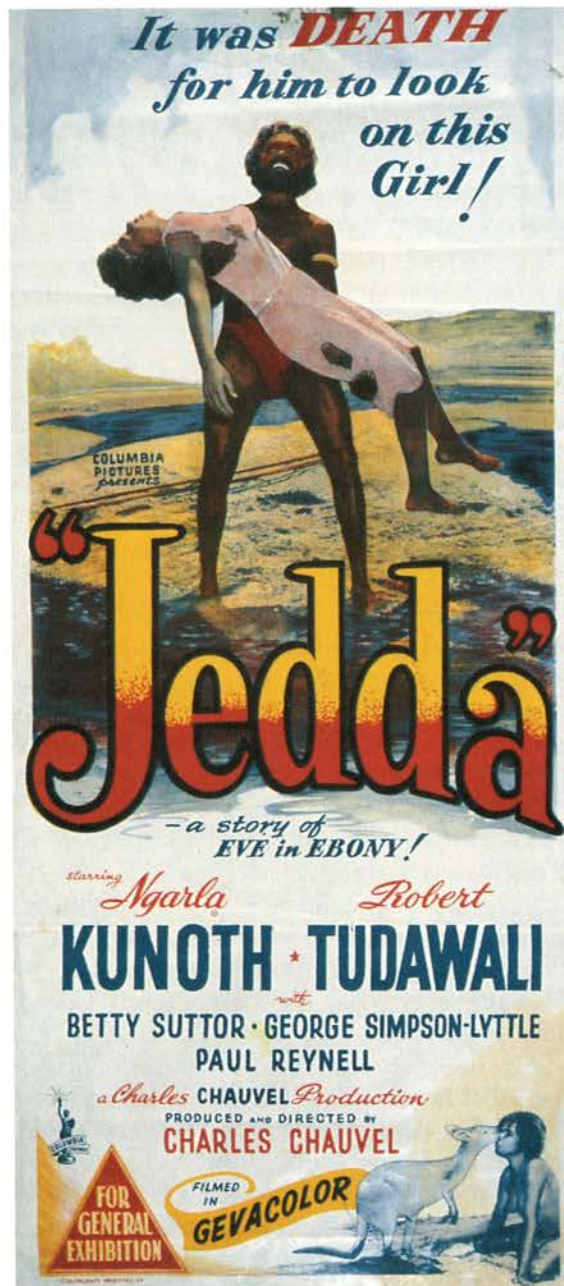
In television, Bond declared, 'size means quality of service'. He might try telling that to anybody comparing the programs on American networks with those on the carefully divided television services of the United Kingdom. As custodians of the air waves, Australian politicians had offered less resistance than those of any comparable society to the businessman's vision of the transmitter as a commodity to be bought and sold. In 1936 R.G. Menzies had confided to Sir John Reith, director-general of the British Broadcasting Corporation, his fears about concentrated ownership of commercial radio stations. When Reith asked whether he was going to put things right, Menzies replied: 'No, we haven't the guts.' That would do as a summary of governments' policies towards radio and television ever since, and it could be applied also to their tolerance of concentrated ownership.

Ethnic newspapers, Sydney 1979.

AUSTRALIAN INFORMATION SERVICE



The newspaper as a daily magazine. When you pick up the Age these days, the media scholar John O'Hara said in 1986, you wait to see what falls out.



NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE