



This photograph shows the staff of the *Wide Bay News*, Maryborough, circa 1911. Note, the boys and the woman. The *News* was established on 2 November 1870 by Ebenezer Thorne, newspaperman, politician and property developer. Its first editor was Carl Feilberg, later the editor of various Queensland titles. He was outspoken on relations between the whites and the indigenous people. The *Wide Bay News* became a bi-weekly in 1873, a tri-weekly in 1882 (after the *Maryborough Chronicle* became a daily) and a daily on 2 October 1911. It ceased publication on 29 November 1919.

William Edward Lingard was the managing director who implemented the shutdown. Lingard began work as a run boy for the *Queensland Times*, Ipswich, on 8 October 1890 and rose to become the manager. He left in September 1913 after working at the paper for 23 years, became the manager of the *Wide Bay News* and within a few months enlarged it from six to eight pages daily. Lingard returned to Ipswich and became general manager of the *Queensland Times*, 1922-1928 and was also "Uncle William" of the "Children's Corner" section. He was general manager of the *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 1928-1941. Lingard died on 20 July 1952, aged 76. See ANHG 109.4.1 and 2 below.

## AUSTRALIAN NEWSPAPER HISTORY GROUP

# NEWSLETTER

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Subscription details appear at end of *Newsletter*. [Number 1 appeared October 1999.]

Ten issues had appeared by December 2000; the *Newsletter* has appeared five times a year since 2001.



### 109.1.1 The new AAP (1): The king is dead; long live the king

The sale of Australian Associated Press has been formally completed. The sale ended 85 years of ownership by some of Australia's major newspaper publishing groups. AAP is now controlled by a consortium of 35 impact investors and philanthropists. They are retaining the AAP name and brand (*Telum Media Alert*, 5 August 2020).

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reports (10 August 2020): Australian Associated Press's new owners are asking long-standing customers to pay the same amount for its newswire content despite less frequent coverage and fewer staff. Acta Diurna AAP, which launched officially at the beginning of August under new chief executive Emma Cowdroy, will need to secure contracts with former clients of AAP to shore up funding and prevent News Corp Australia from poaching customers when its non-compete clause is lifted in six months. Multiple industry sources told the *SMH* that the new business, owned by a group of investors led by Nick Harrington and John McKinnon, were asking subscribers to transition the old contracts to the new company. The sources said that while some subscribers were happy to continue paying the same price because their services were unaffected, others were concerned they were being asked to pay the same amount of money for reduced coverage on particular topics.

When the sale was announced in June, AAP's new owners said it would continue to produce world news, sport, court and political reporting, and that it would have a photography and a FactCheck service. However, the announced job cuts occurred across all divisions, including sport and courts. International correspondents were also affected. News Corp Australia, which launched its own newswire service in June, is prevented from poaching customers for six months under an agreement made when the business was sold.

Businesswoman Jonty Low, 48, who has a degree in media and communications, is the chair of the new AAP board (*Canberra Times*, 8 August 2020, p.47).

**7 September:** AAP launched a crowdfunding campaign to help support the newswire's new not-for-profit model. It released a series of short visual packages to highlight its photography, and asked community members to get involved by visiting the website (*Telum Media Alert*, 7 September 2020).

**21 September:** The Federal Government announced it would provide \$5 million to the AAP Newswire under the Public Interest News Gathering (PING) program. PING is designed to support media organisations main or increase their production and distribution of public-interest journalism in regional communities during the COVID-19 pandemic (*Telum Media Alert*, 21 September 2020).

**28 September 2020:** The architect of an eleventh-hour bid to save AAP left the company as it secured crucial funding from the Morrison government to prevent it from going broke (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 September 2020). Nick Harrington, an investment manager who brought together investors and philanthropists to save the newswire before becoming head of strategy and corporate development, left the company days after it received a \$5 million government grant. AAP, which has lost a string of key media clients, is attempting to secure more external funding through a code that will force Google and Facebook to pay news outlets for their content.

## 109.1.2 The new AAP (2): Editor is interviewed

The ANHG editor interviewed AAP editor, **Andrew Drummond**, by email about the new AAP:

Q. How many people do you have employed on newsgathering now and how many previously?

The new-look AAP has about 75 journalists, photographers and producers and that's a reduction of about 40 people.

Q. Where are they located now, and have any previous locations been removed from your operations?

AAP maintains staff in every Australian state, plus Canberra. There is a reporter based in Wellington, NZ, plus two in London. The newswire hopes to reinstate a permanent reporter in Darwin as soon as possible. For the recent Territory election and Indigenous AFL round we sent reporters and photographers from interstate.

Q. Do you have some general comments on how your newsgathering operations have had to change under the new owners?

It's important to note that the new AAP doesn't have "owners". We are a not-for-profit agency which is overseen by a board and operates in accordance with a charter of independence.

AAP 2.0 is a leaner operation but we're maintaining a 24/7 news service which includes world news and sport from overseas partner agencies, plus photography, and coverage of federal politics, courts, breaking news and sport. AAP's FactCheck unit also continues. The newswire has fewer dedicated finance and business reporters and no longer has a racing or video desk.

AAP continues to focus on delivering factual and quick 'top-line' news but no longer acts as a monitoring service which used to be a significant drain on resources. We've reshuffled our staff rostering and so far the feedback from subscribers on the new model has been positive.

AAP continues to rely on freelance journalists and photographers. This allows us greater geographical freedom, especially during these unique COVID-19 times when there have been significant changes and relocations for regular events such as sporting fixtures.

Q. AAP's client base: how has it changed (old to new)?

The most significant change in custom is that former majority shareholders Nine (formerly Fairfax) and News Corp are no longer subscribers. We hope they see value in subscribing to the AAP service again in the future.

AAP maintains a range of print, broadcast and digital subscribers and we have been in close contact with these customers throughout the transition.

Q. Your competition: pre-31 July, where did your main competition come from? After 1 August, where are you finding your main competition? Is it working out the way you expected?

AAP, 85 years old, has been Australia's only national newswire and in that regard has not had direct competition. An increase in online news and social media over the past decade has certainly added more players to the "quick news" landscape, but we have still prided ourselves on our balance of accuracy and speed. News Corp has launched the NCA wire service which will reportedly be taken to market and that will act in direct opposition to AAP. Despite the introduction of a new player in the market, I think news consumers will recognise that AAP remains an independent source of information which is not influenced by advertising revenue.

Q. Text, photos, videos: Have there been any significant changes in the visual images (still or moving) that you provide?



Andrew Drummond

AAP's text and photography content remains largely the same as it did before the transition, although we have made some slight adjustments following consultation with subscribers. Those changes include story length and publication timelines, for example. The newswire no longer has a video production desk.

As noted previously, AAP 2.0 is operating as a not-for-profit newswire. The agency was saved from closure by a group of investors and philanthropists. When the closure was announced in March there was a wave of public support for AAP and as part of the new model we always intended to harness that goodwill. On September 7 the newswire launched a crowdfunding campaign (under the banner #aapneedsyou) which raised \$100,000 in its first five days. For more information visit <https://www.gofundme.com/f/aap-needs-you> or [aap.com.au](http://aap.com.au)

The messages of support have been overwhelming and there is certainly strong community support for AAP to remain an important part of the Australian media.

### 109.1.3 First female editor of *Age*

Gay Alcorn became the *Age*'s first female editor on 28 September. The former Melbourne editor of *Guardian Australia*, Alcorn replaced acting editor Michelle Griffin who had been standing in since the departure of Alex Lavelle in June. Alcorn previously spent 20 years in the *Age*'s newsroom working in roles such as Washington correspondent, deputy editor and editor of the *Sunday Age*. In her time with the masthead, she won three Walkley Awards (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 September 2020).

Lavelle's exit as editor came a week after 66 journalists had sent a letter to company management expressing concerns about a story on the front page of the newspaper about a Black Lives Matter protest, diversity in the newsroom and their belief editorial leadership was too Sydney-centric. The masthead apologised for the story, which had claimed police were preparing for protesters to spit on them, and said it fell short of the newspaper's editorial values and standards.

Group executive editor James Chessell said at the time he was angry about the errors but refuted the suggestion editorial decisions at the *Age* were made in Sydney. He agreed that the newsroom needed to be more diverse and said initiatives to address this issue were being discussed. When Lavelle stepped down, Chessell said it would be wrong to draw a connection between his departure and the letter.

Alcorn said, "I wasn't there at the time of the letter, but I do want to speak to people about whether those issues have been resolved and whether we need to do more to bring the staff together and what the strategy is and what the editorial mission is. From what I gather, it has been a really exhausting time for all the staff at the *Age* and they work incredibly hard and incredibly well. If I could give them all a collective hug, I would, but it's impossible at the moment. I do feel a bit strange coming in as editor working from home. I can't see or speak to the staff face to face, so I think that'll be an extra challenge for me."

See ANHG 108.1.1 about the appointment of the first female editor of the weekday *Australian*.

### 1091.4 Australian journalists flee China

Australia-China relations have been plunged into their worst crisis since the 1989 Tiananmen massacre after two Australian journalists fled to safety under diplomatic protection and Australian broadcaster Cheng Lei, who works for the state-owned China Global Television Network, was charged with endangering China's security (*Australian*, 9 September 2020, p.1). Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said on 8 September Cheng was "suspected of carrying out illegal activities endangering China's national security", an amorphous and wide-ranging charge that can include virtually any action Beijing disapproves of. In dramatic scenes, Australian journalists, Michael Smith (*Australian Financial Review*) and Bill Birtles (ABC), sheltered in diplomatic compounds in Beijing and Shanghai for four days while diplomats negotiated their exit from the country. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade had become increasingly concerned for their welfare after Cheng was detained for no clear reason and amid a worsening atmosphere of reprisals and punishment in the Beijing-Canberra relationship.

### 109.1.5 James Murdoch resigns from News Corp board

James Murdoch has resigned from the board of News Corp. His resignation, says the *guardian.com* (2 August), confirms divisive splits in the publishing arm of his family's media empire and removes a powerful dissenting voice against the right-wing slant of the group, according to insiders. The move marks the full departure of Rupert Murdoch's youngest son from News Corp and it is likely to boost the influence of his brother, Lachlan, who is seen as being far more sympathetic to right-wing causes.

In his resignation letter, James Murdoch said, "My resignation is due to disagreements over certain editorial content published by the company's news outlets and certain other strategic decisions." In a statement, Rupert Murdoch, chairman of Fox and News Corp's executive chairman, and Lachlan, chief executive and executive chairman of Fox and co-chairman of News Corp's board, expressed gratitude for James' "many years of service to the company. We wish him the very best in his future endeavours." The News Corp board will be reduced to 10 seats from 11. The company gave no indication it would look for another board member.

See also Richard Ackland's comments on James Murdoch, in "Gadfly: Peas in a podcast", *Saturday Paper*, 8-14 August 2020, p.11.

### 109.1.6 Magazines among the COVID business 'deaths'

The coronavirus pandemic—especially its adverse effect on advertising revenue—has been blamed for the downfall of eight Australian magazines. The titles, whose closure was announced by new owners, Mercury Capital, on 21 July, are: *Harper's BAZAAR*, *InStyle*, *ELLE*, *Men's Health Australia*, *Women's Health Australia*, *Good Health*, *NW* and *OK! Australia*. Lilly Vitorovich (*Australian*, 22 July 2020) reports that magazine industry has been struggling to attract paying customers for several years, and this had led to "a raft of closures".

Over the past decade, seven of the top 20 magazines, including Bauer Media's *NW*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Dolly* and *Cleo* have been axed. Of those remaining, only *Australian Geographic* has had a readership increase—by 64 per cent, to 674,000, over the same period. Other magazines to end up on the scrapheap have included *Grazia*, *Famous*, *Yours*, *Penthouse*, and *Men's Style*.

The magazine closures have allowed Mercury Capital to avoid re-signing long-term licensing deals with international publishing giants (*Age*, 27 July 2020, p.27).

See also, Zoe Samios, "Still fit to print, tabloid magazines have the gloss", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 August 2020, p.27.

### 109.1.7 Courier-Mail to be printed on Sunshine Coast

The *Courier-Mail* will not be printed in Brisbane after April 2021 (ABC News online, 23 July 2020). The paper will be printed at the News Corp press centre at Yandina on the Sunshine Coast. The Murarrie plant, in east Brisbane, in use since 1995, will be closed. There will be job losses, but it is not known how many. Yandina has excess capacity since the closure at the end of June of print editions of most News Corp regional titles, especially dailies such as the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* and the *Sunshine Coast Daily*.

The Murarrie plant will be phased out by April 2021. Yandina will print five dedicated editions of the *Courier-Mail*—for Brisbane metropolitan, Queensland country, Sunshine Coast, Wide Bay and Central Queensland. It will also publish the *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney) editions for Queensland, Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Lismore and editions of the *Australian* and the *Sunday Mail*.

### 109.1.8 People

**Fiona Buffini** has begun duties as deputy editor (digital) of the *Australian Financial Review*. Buffini was formerly news director (*Telum Media Alert*, 28 August 2020).

**Mike Connaghan**, one of Australia's leading advertising executives, has been appointed managing director of commercial content for News Corp Australia. He is now running a new commercial division in the company. Connaghan is a former WPP boss who has also led STW for John Singleton and Russell Tate (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 July 2020, p.25).



**Jessica Gardiner** is the new news director for the *Australian Financial Review*. She was formerly companies and markets editor (*Telum Media Alert*, 28 August 2020).

**James Graham** returns as editor of *Big Rigs*, a transport trade magazine, which was closed by News Corp in June but has resumed under new owners, Prime Creative Media (*Telum, Media Alert*, 5 August 2020).

**Claire Harvey** has joined the *Australian* as editorial director. She was previously deputy editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*.

**Catherine McGregor** has been appointed senior staff writer/commentator at the *Australian*. Her career encompasses both the military and journalism. She was awarded the Order of Australia in the Military Division in 2021 (*Telum Media Alert*, 24 August 2020).

**John Salvado** has begun a new role as national sports editor at AAP, based in Melbourne. He joined the newswire in 1994 as a sports journalist and most recently was deputy sports editor (*Telum Media Alert*, 17 August 2020).

**Jessie Tu** and **Declan Fry** are the newly appointed freelance book reviewers for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Age* as part of an emerging critics project with the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund and the Judith Neilson Institute (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 August 2020, p.28). See ANHG 108.1.7.

### 109.1.9 Media literacy and the young

Young people have become more frequent news consumers but experts say media literacy education has not kept up with changing habits and most students now get their news from other people. Research shows 88 per cent of young Australians are consuming news, propelled by the bushfire season and the coronavirus pandemic. But only one in five has received lessons at school in the past year that helped them work out whether news stories could be trusted and about one-third said they could distinguish fake news from real news (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 July 2020, p.13)

### 109.1.10 Journalists at risk of being jailed

Journalists could be jailed for writing or publishing articles found to undermine public confidence in the courts or to interfere with a person's right to a fair trial, under new contempt of court laws proposed in Victoria (*Australian*, 6 August 2020). The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance warned that "public-interest journalism must not be criminalised" and vowed to seek clarification on any proposed recommendations to ensure journalists were not jailed for "legitimately and ethically doing their jobs". A new contempt of court act would for the first time codify the law of contempt — developed by judges over many years — to make it clearer, so that people know what behaviour will be punished and what penalties they face.

Under the changes recommended by the Victoria Law Reform Commission, anyone "involved" with the commission of a contempt could be guilty of an offence. Media lawyer Justin Quill said at the moment, the case law was clear that journalists were not publishers and that contempt of court dealing with publishing required an "act of publication". "I'm concerned that extending the law to include people who are 'involved' in publications might be an attempt to capture journalists, which would be entirely unfair," he said. Quill, who was a member of the advisory committee to the law reform commission and acts for the *Australian*, said this was because journalists did "not have control over the finished product", including the headlines, pictures or any inflammatory sentences included in a report.

### 109.1.11 Recent events

#### 109.1.11.1 Deaths

**Brindisi, Peter:** D. at Noosa, aged 84; rose from being a copy boy at the Melbourne *Argus* to editor and publisher of magazines in Hong Kong; after the *Argus*, he worked for ABC and in TV before heading for Hong Kong about 1970; became a highly successful magazine publisher and PR

consultant there and founded *Jewellery News Asia* in 1983; later sold it for a reported \$1 million before retiring to Queensland's Sunshine Coast (Bob Murray).

**Messer, John Arthur:** D. 11 September 2020, aged 83; one of a large contingent of Queenslanders (he was born in Rockhampton) who worked for the *Age* during the Graham Perkin era; was the newspaper's first full-time environment reporter; was a cadet at the *Morning Bulletin*, Rockhampton; worked on the *Brisbane Courier-Mail*; next to the *Sunday Express* in Fleet Street before returning to Australia to join *The Age*. The environment was a lifelong interest. A tribute to him on the *Age*'s obituary site: "A kind, gentle and likeable man who pioneered reporting on the environment in Melbourne" (John Tidey).

**Newell, Peter:** D. 28 September 2020 in Wollongong, aged 71; grew up in Nabiac; joined *Manning River Times*, Taree, in 1968 as a cadet journalist; became graded journalist at *Illawarra Mercury*, Wollongong, February 1970; rose quickly to become editor in October 1978 at age 29, and general manager in November 1985 at age 36; oversaw the installation of a state-of-the art Goss Urbanite colour press in 1986, allowing the *Mercury* to become possibly the first Australian newspaper to run daily colour pages; left the paper in 2000; joined the board of the Illawarra Steelers Rugby League Club in 1989 and was chairman from 1999 to 2019; helped negotiate Illawarra's merger with St George to form the St George-Illawarra Dragons in 1999 (*Illawarra Mercury*, 28 September 2020).

**Ruddick, Gary Raymond:** D. 20 August 2020 in Ipswich, aged 81; worked as hospital administration cadet for a month; worked in his father's Mildura butcher's shop; began journalism career as a cadet on a Victorian provincial daily in 1960; worked for various Victorian country papers before joining the *Border Mail*, Albury; joined *Northern Daily Leader*, Tamworth, in 1974, and worked as reporter, sub-editor and columnist; edited *North West Magazine* at one stage; wrote weekly current affairs column, "Ruddick on Monday"; initiated the column, "Your Church in Action", and it still runs today; retired from *Leader* in October 2005 as local government reporter; made his final contribution to the *Leader* in 2008; wrote *The Local Rag*, a 104-page book about how country newspapers are run; it took a light-hearted approach to serious issues (*Northern Daily Leader*, 29 August 2020; Gary Ruddick, *The Local Rag*, 1978, p.10; ANHG 35.41, December 2005).

### 109.1.12 NSW first to pass defamation law reforms

New South Wales has become the first jurisdiction in Australia to pass a suite of defamation law reforms, ratcheting up the pressure on the other states and territories to follow suit (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 August 2020, p.3). The changes, which passed the NSW Upper House on 6 August, include a "serious harm" test aimed at weeding out minor claims before a costly trial, and a new public interest defence, modelled on British law. The national reforms, spearheaded by NSW Attorney-General Mark Speakman, are also aimed at reducing the size of defamation payouts. It follows a series of record awards including the historic \$2.9 million actor Geoffrey Rush received following his defamation fight with the *Daily Telegraph*. [The paper's publisher, Nationwide News, has decided not to appeal the Rush award (*Age*, 21 July 2020, p.2).]

### 109.1.13 Opposition to archives merger

Former leaders of the State Archives and Records and Sydney Living Museums have accused the Berejiklian government (NSW) of pre-empting a parliamentary inquiry investigating controversial plans to amalgamate the two bodies (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 August 2020, p.13). State Archives and Sydney Living Museums executive director Adam Lindsay informed staff at the end of July of changes of roles, titles and responsibilities in management across both authorities. The committee is expected to report in October on the proposed merger.

### 109.1.14 Cartoon produces strong reaction

A cartoon in the *Australian* (14 August 2020, p.13) featuring Democrat presidential nominee Joe Biden, 77, and his running partner, Kamal Harris, a 55-year-old daughter of Indian and Jamaican parents, generated a strong response. Johannes Leak's cartoon highlighted part of the Biden statement: "This morning all across the nation, little girls woke up, especially little black and brown girls, who so often feel overlooked and undervalued, in their communities. But today just maybe they're seeing themselves for the first time in a new way: as the stuff of president and vice-

presidents.” The next day the *Weekend Australian* published five letters to the editor in response to the cartoon, and a statement by the editor-in-chief, Chris Dore (*Weekend Australian*, 15-16 August 2020, p.19):

Johannes Leak’s commentary [cartoon] prompted an intense reaction, including ridiculous accusations the cartoon was motivated by racism or was intended to promote racism. The words “little black and brown girls” belong to Joe Biden, not Johannes, and were uttered by the presidential candidate when he named Kamala Harris as his running mate on Thursday; he repeated them in a tweet soon after. As many commentators in the US have noted, Biden is accused of using racial identity as a political weapon, and that is exactly the point Johannes was making in the cartoon. The intention of Johannes’s commentary was to ridicule identity politics and demean racism, not perpetuate it. The *Australian* deplores racism in all its guises, as does Johannes.

There were more letters published during the succeeding week. And Janet Albrechtsen devoted her Wednesday column to it: “Artist Leak paints faux bleeding hearts into a corner”, *Australian*, 19 August 2020, p.10.

### **109.1.15 Lawyer X and the press**

[Extract from article in *Australian*, 2 September 2020, p.8, by Damon Johnston, editor, *Herald Sun*, Melbourne, 2012-19, and now Victorian editor of the *Australian*.]

It was our “holy shit” moment. The email lobbed at 11.40am, March 31, 2015. Once printed, the five-page “originating motion between parties” would join hundreds of pages of affidavits, motions, injunctions and summons stacked in the corner of my office in the *Herald Sun*. The motion emailed by our lawyer, JP Cashen, was part of the official legal record of another pounding we had copped a few weeks earlier in the Supreme Court of Victoria. We had been losing in court for a year. Suppressed. Restrained. Silenced. One night, we were ordered by a court to stop the presses. We were losing the fight to publish the story we called Lawyer X. The Supreme Court even ruled that we could no longer use the pseudonym we created, declaring: “The Defendant is restrained from publishing or causing to be published the phrase ‘Lawyer X’.”

That hurt. Today, Lawyer X — Nicola Gobbo — is the most infamous lawyer in Australian history. Her double life as a gangland barrister and police informer is the subject of a royal commission, books, a television drama and countless newspaper and television stories. Back then, it was very different. The *Herald Sun* — led by Anthony Dowsley, who broke the story, reporter Patrick Carlyon, deputy editor Chris Tinkler and our lawyers Cashen and Justin Quill — was beyond the wire and alone. The rest of the media didn’t follow the story. Politicians did everything to avoid discussing it in public. Worst of all, it was smothered before it had the chance to capture the public’s imagination.

Victoria Police was the only other organisation interested in Lawyer X, and for very different reasons. They wanted to rebury the scandal Dowsley exhumed. By 2015, they were succeeding. In the backwash of all the legal action, it would have been easy to question if the story broken by Dowsley on Monday, March 31, 2014, was worth all the grief.

### **109.1.16 SMH relocates**

The editorial team at the *Sydney Morning Herald* relocated to Nine’s new office at 1 Denison Street, North Sydney, in the week of 17-21 August. Some staff members were still working from home at the time (*Telum Media Alert*, 17 August 2020).

### **109.1.17 Financial results: Seven**

Seven West Media (owner of West Australian Newspapers) has published its financial results for the financial year ending 27 June 2020. Revenue was down from \$1.43 billion last year to \$1.23 billion this year. Net profit after tax was \$40.8 million, down 66.1 per cent (*Telum Media Alert*, 28 August 2020).

### **109.1.18 Good writing is hard**

Les Carlyon’s widow, Denise, says, “[Les] always said good writing was hard, and it was always about the words. If it flowed effortlessly and sparkled with clever imagery, you could be sure the author worked his/her butt off to produce the effort.” Denise Carlyon was speaking at the introduction of a new literary award set up in memory of her late husband, a former editor-in-chief of the *Herald & Weekly Times Ltd*. The award is one of a number of new prizes to emerge for writers who might have produced anything from a scholarly military history to a racy historical



### 109.1.19 Intermedia produces two *Farmers*

### 109.1.20 Covid Catchup: 10-year-old produces newsletter

### 109.1.21 Media companies reject AFP proposal

## 2-CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS: DIGITAL

Over a three-month period dominated by the coronavirus pandemic and a slowdown in advertising, the New York Times Company for the first time reported quarterly revenue that owed more to digital products than to the printed newspaper (*New York Times*, 5 August 2020). As much of its staff worked remotely, the *NY Times* brought in \$US185.5 million in revenue for digital subscriptions and ads during the second quarter of 2020, the company announced on 5 August. The number for print revenue was \$US175.4 million. The company added 669,000 net new digital subscribers, making the second quarter its biggest ever for subscription growth. The *Times* has 6.5 million total subscriptions, a figure that includes 5.7 million digital-only subscriptions, putting it on a course to achieve its stated goal of 10 million subscriptions by 2025.

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission chief Rod Sims has accused Google of spreading misinformation after the search giant claimed a new regulatory code could jeopardise

free services and increase privacy risks (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 August 2020, p.4). Google intensified on 17 August its opposition to a new bargaining code, proposed by the ACCC, that would force internet giants to negotiate with media companies to pay for their news content. Google, which generated income of \$4 billion in Australia last year, placed a warning message on its main search page about the new code, and used an open letter to argue the changes would “dramatically worsen” the experience for users. But Sims said Google was spreading “misinformation” and its assertions were incorrect.

See also: Zoe Samios, “Google prepares for fight with ACCC”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 August 2020, p.26.

### 109.2.3 Editors of digital publications

**Melanie Plane** has been appointed editor of the *Morning Bulletin*, Rockhampton, which is now produced only digitally. **Frazer Pearce**, the editor for 14 years, has departed the publication. Plane is the former deputy editor (*Telum Media Alert*, 14 August 2020).

**Darryn Nufer** has been appointed editor of the Gladstone *Observer*, and is also serving as deputy editor of the *Morning Bulletin*. Both are digitally produced (*Telum Media Alert*, 14 August 2020).

**Shannon Molloy** has been appointed acting news editor for news.com.au while Liz Burke is on maternity leave. He has been at the site since 2018 as a senior writer (*Telum Media Alert*, 17 August 2020).

### 109.2.3 Digital titles for Barossa, Clare and Gawler; and Port Lincoln

**Barossa:** Messenger Community News has launched a daily online publication, the *Barossa, Clare & Gawler News*, covering about 100 towns in the region covered by the title. All stories will be accessible inside the *Adelaide Advertiser* as part of a digital subscription. Jack Hudson, previously a digital sports reporter for the *Advertiser*, leads the new digital title (*Telum Media Alert*, 5 August 2020).

**Port Lincoln:** Messenger Community News has launched the digital-only *Port Lincoln News*, with Emily Jarvis as editor. She worked previously at the *Dalby Herald*, Queensland (*Telum Media Alert*, 14 August 2020).

### 109.2.4 Google unhappy with new payment plan

Google has attacked a new code of conduct that will force tech giants to pay media companies for their news content, warning that the government intervention will hinder the company’s ability to service Australian users (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 1-2 August 2020, p.5). Under the “world-first” proposal, drafted by Australia’s competition regulator and unveiled by the Morrison government on 31 July, Google and Facebook will have three months to negotiate revenue-sharing deals with media companies before independent arbitrators are called in to impose a compulsory arrangement. The platforms will potentially face hundreds of millions of dollars in fines and breaches. The code may be legislated by November and payments may flow early to mid-2021.

### 109.2.5 News website for high school student journalists

The NSW Department of Education has introduced a “Student Voices Hub” website featuring news, opinions, videos and podcasts produced by students, for students, across the state’s 2200 public schools (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 August 2020, p.14). A network of student journalist teams is being established and taught how to develop and write stories about their schools and communities. Education Minister Sarah Mitchell said student perspectives and experiences shaped schools. “It will also provide students with opportunities to refine their writing and content creation skills, along with pitching their stories and ideas,” she said.

### 109.2.6 Into an imaginary domain

Domain has dismissed a junior lifestyle reporter after an investigation revealed she was fabricating quotes in articles that appeared on the real estate listing website (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 September 2020). Kate Bartels, who joined Domain in April 2019, wrote two articles that quoted Melbourne-based clinical psychologist Dr Sarah Barker. However, Dr Barker was not interviewed for the articles and the quotes were not provided by her. Domain has since publicly apologised for the two articles, but an investigation has discovered there have been multiple other incidents of

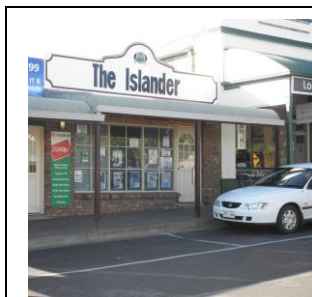
fabricated quotes or interviews written by the reporter. Hundreds of articles written by Bartels have been taken down from the Domain website until the investigation is complete. Three of Bartels' stories appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Age*, but all have been cleared of fabrication and met editorial standards. Nine Entertainment Co (owner of this masthead) owns 59.3 per cent of Domain. Domain's magazine appears as a liftout in the two newspapers and some articles appear on the websites.

### 109.2.7 New regional news website

*Country Caller* is a new multimedia online news service advocating for rural Queensland (*Telum Media Alert*, 7 September 2020). The independent masthead is based in Chinchilla, 300km north-west of Brisbane. Founder is former Nine News and News Corp journalist, Harry Clarke. The website aims to provide high-quality local news and analysis of issues affecting rural Queensland residents, particularly across the Western Downs, Surat Basin and Maranoa regions.

### 109.2.8 Newcastle Herald on Facebook

**Ross Lane**, of Newcastle, writes: Just a point of interest re my subscription to the *Newcastle Herald* I pay \$15 a month for the full newspaper format for six copies per week. Now the paper seems to be putting regular posts etc on Facebook. When I attempt to look at these, I cannot read the full article unless I am a subscriber. Now we have two subscriptions, the \$15 one I have plus the \$16.25 one that gives me access to the Facebook posts. At least I think I have the story right. From what the lass told me, in the long run the content is much the same, I guess they can update news quickly on Facebook. Other newspaper Facebook pages have big news articles advertised, but when attempting to open them, they are only available if you subscribe to the paper. The *NH* does give you access to some news on Facebook. The papers that deny access include *Townsville Bulletin*, *Bowen Independent* and the *Australian* that I am aware of.



## 3—CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS: COMMUNITY & PROVINCIAL

### 109.3.1 Printing purge: ACM explains the changes being made

This is an edited version of an article by **Antony Catalano**, executive chairman of Australian Community Media (ACM), (*Canberra Times*, 1 August 2020, p.31):

All publishers used to have their own printing press—because they could afford to. But that's not the commercial reality we face today in Australian publishing. These days, as news audiences have increasingly moved online, we've seen reductions in the number of printed publications and reductions in the volume of printing. This has left our printing presses with more capacity than there is demand—and that was before the economic challenges brought by the coronavirus pandemic.

So the ACM business has been looking at the most effective and efficient ways to produce our newspapers in the future. Now, following a period of consultation with affected staff, we have decided to proceed with the closure of our Canberra, Ballarat and Murray Bridge printing facilities, with the final decision regarding Wodonga still being considered. As part of this change, we have entered into collaborative agreements with News Corp Australia that will see us use each other's printing networks.

To be clear: this is not ACM stepping away from publishing printed copies of our newspapers. We know our trusted newspaper journalism has impact and influence in the communities we serve. In fact, these practical, sensible arrangements to cut duplication of press facilities and delivery truck routes are designed to make our newspapers stronger and more sustainable into the future. The

reality for publishers like ACM, News Corp and Nine Entertainment Co is that rationalising how we produce and distribute our newspapers helps protect the viability of our core businesses.

For ACM, our core focus is being Australia's best regional publisher delivering quality journalism for our audiences, effective advertising solutions from our sales teams and excellent service and results for our customers. With revenues from printing in decline and the advertising market challenged we can no longer afford to be hamstrung by big, expensive, capital-intensive manufacturing operations. So, these changes are the prudent thing to do. It's smart business.

The industry has been moving this way for some time, of course. We've been streamlining the distribution of newspapers for years. I recall as a young journalist at the *Age* that the paper would come off the presses at Spencer Street along the conveyor belt and be bundled and loaded onto trucks already carrying bundles of the *Herald Sun*. Those trucks would pick up copies of the *Herald Sun* from Flinders Street, come around to collect the *Age* and then head off on their various routes to the suburbs and to country Victoria to drop off bundles of papers. More recently, before Fairfax Media was merged into Nine, Fairfax and News Corp entered commercial arrangements in mid-2018 to use each other's printing networks in NSW and Queensland.

With ACM's move into private ownership in mid-2019, Nine exited printing completely. But it's still the publisher of the *Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Australian Financial Review*. News Corp has been reducing its number of print centres over the years and recently announced the closure of another in Queensland. With Michael Miller at News and Hugh Marks at Nine, ACM has been looking for the best outcome for our industry. We've parked egos at the door and left behind the traditional media rivalry so we can get better, more rational, outcomes around printing and distribution.

I believe competition flourishes as a result of these changes. Nine's publishing business—the old Fairfax—will be more profitable out of rationalisation. ACM and its 150-plus titles will be more profitable as will News, given we will both retain more cost-effective print centres as a result. And if you are improving your profits you're not having to make the kinds of continual cuts the industry has seen over the past decade.

The question ACM has been asking is: what business are we in? The answer: we are a print and digital publishing business serving regional Australians. And we don't need to own expensive factories to achieve our goals. The old-school mentality was that if you had a newspaper you printed it yourself. And there was a time when you could afford to do that. But there are also plenty of publishers who don't own presses.

We currently print the *Saturday Paper*, for example, and it competes against us, and other papers. Morry Schwartz, who owns the *Saturday Paper*, doesn't say, "I have to own a printing plant", he just contracts out that work to the best printer. When I ran Metro Media Publishing in Melbourne, starting out with one magazine and growing it to 32 titles, we produced 1,065,000 magazines per week and never owned a printing plant.

At ACM, without these significant changes to our printing operations and operational costs, we will be continually swimming against the tide. The printed newspaper still has great desirability for a significant part of our audience. I'm a big believer that digital brands are stronger with print and there's lots of evidence to demonstrate that. But nobody thinks of ACM as a manufacturing business. We're in the news business. We're a regional media company. And, if we aren't anchored down by the massive capital expenditure required to maintain these manufacturing plants, we can put the savings towards our journalism, the distribution of our journalism and development of digital marketplaces that will transform our revenues.

The impact of COVID-19 on the Australian economy has no doubt accelerated the need for this change. We've already seen News and other publishers close titles due to the pandemic. ACM has worked hard to be able to resume printing dozens of our suspended titles, and that has been through prudent financial management. But the virus has changed the face of our industry, and we will be feeling it for some time yet. Like many companies, we need to make smart decisions now for the future of our business.

Our future is as a capital-light business focused purely on our publishing enterprises in print and digital and on the digital marketplaces and trading platforms that will provide new revenues to sustain our journalism in the years ahead. It's just common-sense economics.

### 109.3.2 Three ACM print centres close, and a fourth sold

ACM closed its Canberra and Murray Bridge printing centres on 28 August and will close its Ballarat facility on 2 October. On 22 September it announced that its Wodonga site had been sold to McPherson Media Group as a going concern, with all staff to transfer over to McPhersons. Effective date for the change was set at 1 October. Ross McPherson says (email to ANHG, 23 September 2020) the McPherson group will close its Shepparton print centre because the Wodonga press has “significantly greater capacity and a longer life, so we plan to move all of our printing there, plus take on the ACM titles like the *Border Mail*, *Wagga Advertiser*, *Leeton* and *Griffith*, etc.”.

Sixty-one jobs have been lost from the ACM Canberra site alone. No figure has been put on the jobs lost from the other two sites so far (*Canberra Times*, 1 August 2020, p.6). An example of how the print centre closures affect where some ACM dailies will be printed long term follows (source: Jon Clarke, ACM):

- *Northern Daily Leader* (Tamworth): North Richmond.
- *Newcastle Herald*: North Richmond (since late 2018).
- *Daily Liberal* (Dubbo): North Richmond.
- *Courier* (Ballarat): outsourced to News Limited Melbourne.
- *Murray Valley Standard* (Murray Bridge): News Limited Adelaide.

### 109.3.3 ACM launches real-estate advertising package

ACM executive chairman Antony Catalano's ambitious digital property strategy for his regional media business has taken an important step forward with the launch of real estate advertising packages bundling print campaigns with listings on *realestateview.com.au*. (*Canberra Times*, 24 July 2020). Agents and vendors in four key markets across three states are now able to bundle their advertising in leading ACM newspapers with listings on the national property portal. ACM announced in February that executive chairman Catalano had joined the board of *realestateview.com.au* and, together with business partner and ACM co-owner Alex Waislitz, had secured the largest interest in the online platform, which competes with Domain, majority owned by Nine Entertainment Co, and *realestate.com.au*, controlled by News Corp.

The new bundling offer is being piloted through two of ACM's leading mastheads in Victoria, the *Courier* in Ballarat and the *Bendigo Advertiser*, as well as the *Illawarra Mercury* in NSW and the *Redland City Bulletin* in outer Brisbane. The bundled print and digital listings push follows the successful February pilot in Newcastle and subsequent roll out in Sydney of the “Today Acquire” digital marketing platform, which helps vendors find buyers wherever they are online.

### 109.3.4 Sydney and northern rivers: ACM launches two magazines

**Northern Beaches:** A free weekly magazine for Sydney's northern beaches is part of Antony Catalano's expansion of his ACM regional publishing group into the metro market. *Northern Beaches Review*, with a focus on local lifestyle and real estate news, will begin a print relationship between ACM and established digital property platform, *realestateview.com.au*. Catalano, who took control of the ACM group of 170 mostly regional and rural news titles in 2019, is a key shareholder in *realestateview.com.au*. He has made no secret of his desire to not only build Australia's biggest regional media business but to do so alongside a comprehensive digital property marketing strategy.

The editor of the *Northern Beaches Review* will be Kate Cox, a former editor of the *Sun-Herald*. Using the mantra “love where you live”, Cox said readers of the *Northern Beaches Review* could expect something quite different from a traditional local newspaper. The glossy magazine will include local news but also stories about people and events in the area and lifestyle content, with a healthy section devoted to real estate, in partnership with *realestateview.com.au*. Inspiration for



the content mix and styling has come from the success of the *Weekly Review* in Melbourne, established by Antony Catalano a decade ago. The *Northern Beaches Review* will begin publication on 7 October, with 65,000 copies letterbox-dropped across the Northern Beaches local government area.

**Northern Rivers:** ACM will launch a local print and digital publication in the Northern Rivers region of NSW called the *Northern Rivers Review*. The first edition will appear on 29 October. Sophie Moeller, editor of the *Lismore Echo* for three years, will lead the editorial team for the *Review* (*Telum Media Alert*, 21 September 2020).

### 109.3.5 Tasmanian country: one revived paper, one new print edition

Font Public Relations has bought a second weekly newspaper in Tasmania, and both have been from News Corp Australia. The second paper is one that News Corp was ceasing to print, *Tasmanian Country*. The first was the *Derwent Valley Gazette*, serving New Norfolk and district. Font has installed Karolin MacGregor as editor and Roger Hanson as reporter-at-large. Font publishes also three monthly papers and a quarterly in Tasmania.

Damian Bester, a former News Corp employee who was editor of the *Derwent Valley Gazette* for 12 years, has converted his news website into a monthly printed newspaper, the *New Norfolk and Derwent Valley News*. The first edition appeared on 17 July, two days after the deadline for ANHG No. 108. In that edition, Bester said, “I established the *New Norfolk News* as a blog-based news site in July 2008 and have published 5712 articles on that platform. As a freelance editor for the last year, I have produced pages for newspapers around the country, all the while continuing the free service that is the *New Norfolk News*.”

Bester says the first issue of the monthly paper was received really well. On 30 July he said, “I’m still being stopped in the street by strangers telling me how much they appreciated it and several new advertisers have approached me since it hit the streets. The real test is going to be whether people are prepared to pay for the future issues. I’m starting on the next issue now.

“It’s mostly a one-man-band although I have a colleague in Queensland who designed the look of the paper and is helping with the layouts while I find my way with InDesign; another colleague down here designed the ads when clients were unable to supply them ready to run; I hired a photographer to work with me for a day; and an ex-council colleague is selling the ads as a contractor. Actually it’s a bigger band than I thought, when you look at it like that!”

The Hobart *Mercury* ran a story on launch day and the ABC gave it a few mentions in the early-morning news bulletins as Bester sped through the Upper Derwent Valley distributing papers to the country shops with the temperature around minus 1. “The *Mercury* is doing the printing and will handle the distribution from issue number 2,” he said.

### 109.3.6 Kingaroy, etc.: Print kicks on and expands

In the weeks immediately following the closure of the print editions of scores of Queensland News Corp regional newspapers, independent operators were stepping up to fill the gaps (ABC News Queensland, 28 July 2020). Seven staff at the *South Burnett Times*, **Kingaroy**, were told they no longer had jobs when the paper moved entirely online. They turned around and started a printed newspaper, *Burnett Today*, 100 metres down the road. Editorial team leader Jessica McGrath said, “Opening the paper and having paper clippings from schools, looking in the obituaries ... it’s just part of people’s routine. People love to see their faces in the paper. I think a newspaper is a part of a tradition that people weren’t ready to leave.” Ten editions of the paper had been printed by 17 September, with separate covers for the South Burnett and Central and North Burnett. The paid newspaper is printing 6,200 copies per edition. The first issue was 52 pages. McGrath said in an email to ANHG, “Our weekly newspaper has been 56 pages, but we have had a few 64-page issues—which is a big effort for our team of seven.”

A few hours north in **Gayndah**, *North Burnett News* editor Tiffany Kirk has also seized on the new gap in the market, expanding her paper from covering Gayndah to the entire North Burnett. “It took me about half an hour after hearing about the news to decide to expand,” she said. “I just know being a country girl myself, and living in Gayndah all of my life basically, that people needed this. A lot of people rely on that local news and printed news to keep them informed.” The weekly

paper, with a print run of 1,300, started with 16 pages and has gone to 20 pages and Kirk expects it to keep growing with community support.

In the **Wide Bay**, publisher Malcolm Quinn has launched the fortnightly *Hervey Bay Advertiser* to replace the former print editions of the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* and *Hervey Bay Independent*. Quinn, who owns a real estate agency, said with nearly a third of the district population aged over 65, there was a strong market for print. “They’ve been brought up on that tactile newspaper feel,” he said. “And clearly the commercial support is still there from advertisers, which means buyers are reading ads in papers. “We’ve been overwhelmed. We’ve gone from zero to sold-out [advertisements], in an 80-page newspaper, every fortnight for the next six months.”

News Corp’s decision to move two papers on Queensland’s **Southern Downs** online encouraged another newspaper to resume printing early. The *Southern Free Times*, based in Warwick, stopped printing in April as sales took a hit because of the coronavirus. Editor Jeremy Sollars said the decision to bring it back in early June was motivated partly by the loss of local print papers, the *Warwick Daily News* and *Stanthorpe Border Post*. “It was always our belief that the economy would get back to some kind of normal to allow us to start printing again, but certainly the News Corp decision was a factor in the timing,” he said. “We think there is a future for print. We don’t think it’s dead at all — quite the opposite. The feedback that we get from readers and the business community is very positive, as far as having a physical, printed publication to hold in their hands.”

### 109.3.7 Printing reduced and sometimes stopped

From the week beginning Monday, 16 August, the *Port Macquarie News*, NSW, which had been appearing tri-weekly, has been a weekly (Friday); and the *Armidale Express*, which had slipped to bi-weekly issue, was not being printed. The *Camden Haven Courier*, Laurieton, has been printed on Thursdays since September. The papers at Moree, Glen Innes and Inverell were appearing in print weekly. *Nambucca Guardian News* was withdrawn from publication for four weeks from 20 August. It was planned that there then should be “a revision each four weeks as to whether it will resume publication”. It was still “in stand down” on 29 September. The *North West Star*, Mount Isa, discontinued its weekly print edition on 27 August 2020. The *North West Star* is a former daily.

### 109.3.8 *Border Watch*, SA’s oldest and biggest regional title, closes

Mount Gambier’s *Border Watch*, established in 1861, boasted that it was South Australia’s oldest and largest regional newspaper, but that did not prevent its closure on 21 August. It had been published four days a week (Tuesday to Friday).

Thirty-eight jobs were lost when The Border Watch Newsgroup shut up shop. The Newsgroup also closed the *South Eastern Times*, Millicent (established 1969), and the *Pennant*, Penola (1946). Declining advertising revenues and falling circulation, aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, along with increasing competition from a variety of digital media platforms led to the closures.

[Rod Kirkpatrick writes: When I visited the offices of the *Border Watch* in 2003, I was highly impressed by its newspaper filing room. It was custom-built to store the bound volumes easily and well. A historian’s delight.]

### 109.3.9 Mildura, Swan Hill and Kerang-Cohuna: Print resumes, but ...

At the end of March, three newspapers owned by the Elliott Newspaper Group in north-western Victoria, ceased printing temporarily. They have now returned to printing, but less frequently. Where there were a total of 11 printed editions a week, there are now five. The *Sunraysia Daily*, Mildura, stayed out of print for only one week: for the week from 28 March to 4 April 2020. It resumed Saturday printing on 4 April, Wednesday printing from 20 May and Friday printing from 19 June. It is still being printed three times a week. The *Guardian*, Swan Hill, was out of print from the week ending 28 March until it reinstated a Friday print edition from 1 May. It was formerly a tri-weekly. The *Gannawarra Times*, Kerang and Cohuna, was out of print from the week ending 28 March until it began producing a Friday print edition from 22 May. This was changed to a Tuesday print edition from 7 July. It was formerly a bi-weekly.

Glenn Robinson, general manager of the *Sunraysia Daily*, provided these details. He mentioned, too, that the *Sunraysia Daily* will celebrate its centenary with a souvenir edition on Friday, 16 October 2020. See ANHG 107.3.1

### 109.3.10 New regional start-ups

Following are some of the print editions of newspapers that have been launched because so many other newspapers have ceased printing:

**Lismore area:** The *Northern Rivers Times* is a free weekly seeking to capitalise on the closure of the print edition of the *Northern Star*, a daily. The *Star* began publication in 1876. The new paper was launched by some of the former *Star* journalists.

**Casino area:** A new weekly free paper, the *Richmond River Independent*, has been launched at Casino and has already celebrated its tenth issue. Edited by Susanna Freymark, the paper is community owned and distributes 10,000 copies in the Richmond Valley and Kyogle local government areas, as well as Lismore (*Telum Media Alert*, 7 September 2020).

**Yass:** Former television journalist Jasmin Jones has joined with two silent partners, both members of her local community, to establish the *Yass Valley Times*.

Other new papers are the *Southern Highlands Express*, NSW; the *West Queensland Echo*, the *Wet Tropics Times*, Queensland; the *Hunter River Times*, the *Braidwood Changing Times*, NSW.

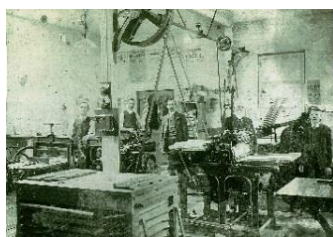
**Boonah and Ipswich:** The *Fassifern Guardian*, a family-owned weekly newspaper that began publication in Boonah in the Scenic Rim district of Southern Queensland in May 1904, has expanded into Ipswich. It seized the opening left by the end of printed editions of the daily *Queensland Times*, established in 1861. *Guardian* editor Drew Creighton announced (*Fassifern Guardian*, 17 August) that the paper would expand into Ipswich on 2 September, enlarging its masthead at the same time to become the *Fassifern Guardian & Tribune*. Creighton said, “The weekly paid newspaper and website boasts a readership of 40,000 people in an area encompassing Boonah, north to Ipswich, south to Rathdowney, west to Aratula and east to Beaudesert.”

### 109.3.11 Newspaper journalist’s documentary a film festival finalist

*Gloucester Advocate* journalist, Anne Keen was a finalist in the Far South Film Festival for her short documentary film, *Undermining a Community: The Social Cost of Regional Mining* (*Gloucester Advocate*, 21 August 2020). The documentary highlights the fragmentation of the Gloucester community caused by Gloucester Resources Limited’s plans for the open cut Rocky Hill Mine. As the local print journalist, Keen had been covering the Rocky Hill mine for around four years. Her documentary did not win a prize.

### 109.3.12 Meals (and news) on Wheels

In Gloucester, NSW, older residents can have the weekly *Gloucester Advocate* delivered with their Meals on Wheels. The Buckets Way Neighbourhood Group offers this service. Group members have to go and buy the copies of the paper from the newsagent because there is no delivery service.



4—NEWSPAPER HISTORY

### 109.4.1 Closing chapter of a Maryborough (Qld) daily

The first two items in this section (109.4) relate to the cover picture. In the last issue of the *Wide Bay News*, Maryborough, on 29 November 1919, the leading article, almost certainly written by W.E. Lingard, said (this was cited in the *Tweed Daily*, Murwillumbah, 13 December 1919, p.3):

*Australian Newspaper History Group Newsletter*, No 109, October 2020— 16

It is with very many regrets that we address readers of the *News* for the last time this morning. For nearly half-a-century the *Wide Bay and Burnett News* has been published at more or less frequent intervals, but today we cease publication. Many have been the vicissitudes of this journal. It has had its periods of prosperity, and of adversity, its victories and its defeats. The years of war have proved to be a period of serious financial strain on all newspapers, and particularly on those published daily. The excessive cost of news print supplies has been a severe strain all round, and especially has this been, so with the journals which have been unable to pass the increased cost on. The pre-war charge for newspaper supplies was £13 to £14 per ton, but with the advent of the world-wide war those rates slowly but surely, climbed upwards, till high-water mark was reached with a charge of £84 (\$168) per ton to one of our Queensland daily papers. Put in another way, some newspaper managements paid over 1d. per sheet for parcels of newsprint paper, which was subsequently retailed to agents at ¾d. per sheet, less a discount for monthly payments.

Australian newspaper men can speak feelingly in relation to profiteering. They know that during the years 1917-1918 they were forced to pay the American combine controlling paper supplies £6/15/10 (\$13.60) per ton more for their paper than the combine could charge as the highest price for similar paper in Canada, although the Canadian rate allowed a bigger rate of profit to millowners than at any period before the war. The vast bulk of the paper imported into Australia during that period came from Canada, the imports from Norway and Sweden being very small indeed. Further than that, it is known, from bitter experience, that several weeks before the armistice was signed the American combine referred to was able to commandeer shipping for the purpose of dumping its surplus stocks on the Australian markets at the highest rates and also at the highest charges for shipping freights, etc. Newspaper proprietors have borne these costs stoically, at all times hoping against hope that with the cessation of warfare something in the nature of a slump in paper values would set in. Such, however, has not proved to be the case.

Paper which before the war the management of this journal landed in the *News* office at 7/6d (75c) per ream, is now quoted at 25/9 (\$2.58) f.o.b. Brisbane, with a distinctly hardening tendency. The long-looked for relief is therefore not forthcoming, and the position is disquieting indeed. The larger newspapers in the metropolitan cities are meeting the situation by greatly-increased advertising rates to clients. About three months ago both the leading Sydney daily newspapers increased their selling rate to 1½d. per copy, whilst they doubled many of their advertising charges, which are now up to 60/ (\$6) per double column inch — a previously-unheard-of charge for Australian advertising.

Whilst such charges have had to be borne, with resultant losses, in many instances, the demands from employees for their pound of flesh has (sic) not been lacking. The increased cost of living has affected newspaper employees in common with other sections of the community, and it is but reasonable to expect that they, too, demand increases, and get them. There is, however, a breaking point to all such demands, and the *News* has reached a stage at which shareholders judge it better to quit whilst creditors can get their 20/ (\$2) in the £1 (\$2) than to go on. This company has had to bear excess costs which an angel from heaven could not avoid, and which have totalled approximately two-thirds of the capital of the company. The future indicates little relief in this direction. We are faced with claims for increases in salaries for every member of the staff. We are in the midst of an appalling drought, which spells disaster to many a brave man on the land, and, after him, to the business man. These factors all accentuate the post-war depression. With these problems in review, we may possibly be more pessimistic than is warranted, but we think not.

#### 109.4.2 ‘Uncle William’ farewells members of the Sunshine League

The *Queensland Times* of 16 June 1928, p.6, carried a letter from the departing general manager, W.E. Lingard, written for the “Children’s Corner”. It began: “My dear boys and girls”. He said it had been his privilege for the past six years to represent “our friend, Uncle William” at all public gatherings. He found that he could not become associated with members of the Sunshine League without coming to know and respect them. He assured the children that “Uncle William” would continue to write to them but “Mr F.J Meacham” [the new general manager] would represent “Uncle William” at public gatherings. The Sunshine League raised money for the children’s wards at Ipswich General Hospital.

#### 109.4.3 A schoolgirl visits the *Brisbane Telegraph*, 1931

*Telegraph*, Brisbane, Monday 26 January 1931, p.6: The following article was written by Mary McCabe, of Mt. St. Joseph’s School, Nundah, after a visit to the *Telegraph* with a party of schoolgirls:

Glance along the evening trains or trams and you will have a demonstration of the popularity of the *Telegraph*, Brisbane’s foremost evening paper. Almost every worker carries a copy home, not only for the news but for the advertisements. No other evening journal in the Commonwealth commands such a proportion of small advertisements, as the *Telegraph*. Let us now follow (after giving some idea of how this widely circulated journal is read in accurate and attractive form, with many illustrations to lend interest to the details) the processes through which the paper goes in the preparation of the news for the benefit of the general public. The copy boy, or “printer’s devil”,

takes the copy to the composing room, where the overseer gives out the takes to the operators, who work most efficiently at casting the linotype, because the compositor has become, an expert manipulator of the keyboard of the wonderful linotype machine.

As its name suggests, this machine sets a line of type at a time. As a key like that of [a] typewriter is pressed, a matrix falls into place, bearing on its edge the impress of the letter, punctuation mark, or figure required. Hardly is it there before another drops beside it, and in a twinkling the speedy operator has set a line, but not yet of type. He presses a handle and the machine carries the line to the lead pot, ready for the moulding of a perfect line of type, which is carried along and deposited in a receptacle, neatly taking its place alongside the previous line. Directed by the nimble fingers of the operator, the linotype has set a line of type, and now automatically lifts, with its arm, the line of matrices and carries them aloft to the magazine. The article is set. A proof is pulled, and this with the copy is taken to the readers.

The reader follows the printed proof, whilst his assistant reads from the original copy. Mistakes are corrected, a revise is pulled to ensure that the corrections, have not led to further mistakes, and the matter is then placed in position in the forme. Gradually the page is filled, attention being given to the attractive display of news and advertisements. The forme is then placed in position for the next operation— the stereotyping. The forme is made up with news-type and photograph blocks, and now the papier maché passes through a mangle and all the type and blocks are impressed upon it; the result being that the papier maché emerges, a perfect mould of the entire page.

Experts at the stereotype machine are taking an impression of the set page, and are transforming it into a semi-circular mould, which is transferred to a receptacle, forming a jacket to a cylinder. Between the receptacle, containing the mould, and the cylinder there remains a cavity, into which molten lead is pumped. Cold water circulating across the cylinder rapidly solidifies the metal, and when cooled the lead forms a plate, semi-cylindrical in shape, in order to fit the modern rotary press. The type matter and blocks are raised from the level of the plate, thus forming a printing surface, to which ink will adhere. It is then clamped on with others to the printing press, against which the paper rollers rotate, with the ink rollers as it were “chipping in” to place the ink over the stereotyped plates. This, of course, is happening on the great machines (made in London by Joseph Foster and Sons), which print the newspapers from the giant rolls of paper. Paper, stereo, and ink are all revolving simultaneously.

The loud whirring noise, as the machines do their work, is incessant, and it is bewildering to watch the rapidity with which the newspapers are printed, cut, folded, and counted. Miles of paper go through this wonderful machine for every edition of the *Telegraph*, but never does the machinery make a mistake in counting. The papers are almost hot when the publishers hand them to the street sellers and agents. Soon they are on the streets and in the homes. A fleet of speedy motor vehicles convey the issue to the railway station for dispatch to the country centres and suburban areas for circulation by the agents, and an army of boys press the sales in the streets.

#### **109.4.4 Sculling and the role of the sporting press**

Stuart Ripley, in an Australian book, *Sculling and Skulduggery: A history of professional sculling* (2010), has a section on “The role of the sporting press”. [Thanks to Peter Gill for drawing this to ANHG’s attention.] Following is an edited extract:

During the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early-twentieth century, newspaper growth and the development of professional sport were interrelated. Cashman has suggested that the sporting press helped build a sporting universe that inspired the public to demand more sport. He indicated that sports reporting invested “shape, meaning and moral worth” into the public’s perception of sport and sportsmen...

The cable telegraph’s introduction in the middle of the nineteenth century enhanced the development and following of sport. The communication service broke down geographical restrictions and localised competitions were expanded, while the course of national and international contests could be followed within days or hours of happening events... The introduction of the telegraph amplified the channels and circulation of sporting news and the diverse and comprehensive sports coverage contributed to the cultural legitimacy of sport in society. The expansion of news services and the protraction of such conviviality enhanced free and widespread publicity, with an eye to gate receipts.



In return, journalists were given access to particular sporting camps. sports journalism contributed to a close relationship between sports entrepreneurs and sports journalists.

Professional sculling provides a fitting example of the press/entrepreneur relationship. The sporting press' expansion was aided by professional sculling's international foray and their association was consolidated from the 1880s. The backers of individual scullers normally promoted sculling races and stakeholders were usually eminent citizens who had rowing interests. Sports editors, too, were rowing enthusiasts and they had direct national and international contact to receive and despatch sculling challenges efficiently. A natural administrative progression for professional sculling was sports editors as stakeholders and administrators. This role enabled them to become influential figures and promote the events of which they held controlling interests. Sports editors, such as Bennett (*Town and Country Journal*), Coombes (*Referee*), Aldworth (*Sunday Times*), Mason (*Sun*), Andrews (*Sun*) and Blackman (*Sydney Mail*) became prominent sculling administrators. They enhanced and expanded professional sculling through their capacity to liaise and administer globally and they canvassed for scullers' stake money. They codified the sport, and through their newspapers they sponsored major events.

#### 109.4.5 Colin Bennett, grandson of John Monash

Colin Bennett was a journalist at the *Age*, Melbourne, from 1950-1980. He had a break on a London weekly in the early 1950s, where he became interested in film, theatre and opera criticism. This led to his becoming (at that stage) the longest serving film critic—25 years—on an Australian paper (Roland Perry, *Monash: The Outsider Who Won a War*, p.520).

Following is an extract from Colin Bennett's unpublished memoir, "Reflections in the Dark: Film Writings 1952-1980 (completed in 1995):

I had begun a cadetship as an *Age* reporter, checking the price of cabbages in the early morning markets, phoning estate agents for auction results and, five nights a week, reporting the dog coursing. After a couple of years of this, I sailed for England and tramped Fleet Street unsuccessfully, making ends meet in the snow and sludge of Wimpole Street as a London postman.

Oral history can be dangerously misleading, and some people find it difficult to believe descriptions of the Dickensian working conditions that existed in the early 1950s at the office of the non-unionised weekly paper where I finally landed a job as a reporter and film, theatre, ballet and opera critic. First I had to work full-time for a month for no pay to prove my worth to the proprietors. Then came the offer: six pounds a week, which was about two pounds less than a bus driver.

Our office was a London basement dungeon under the road in South Kensington, reached by a flight of wooden steps beneath a trapdoor. There we would work six days a week, an average of 70 hours, in cubicles alongside an open drain and a closed sewer pipe. We took all the photographs, proof-read and laid out the pages and, on a few occasions, even worked the linotype machines. Sometimes I would return to this dungeon from a film preview and start to type, unaware that a heavy storm had broken above ground. Slowly water began seeping into my shoes. The basemen was awash. We four journalists snatched up our only precious possessions, our typewriters, and waded for the ladder and the trap door.

The local borough councillors told us we had only to lift a finger and they would have the place condemned. But the proprietors were well aware of it. If we had lifted that finger, everyone would have been sacked overnight and the four brothers who ran the newspaper chain would have stepped into the breach with all their relatives. Instead we held secret chapel meetings of the National Union of Journalists in that waterlogged dungeon. We compiled a secret time-book (here was the proof that we worked 70 hours a week) and plotted to employ the first West Indian journalist in Britain: Jan Carew, actor, storyteller and, later, novelist of note.

After four years the British Army caught up with me for national service. The military told me to leave the country or be drafted and, in all probability, marched off to the anti-terrorist campaign in Malaya. My wife and I packed our bags. (Film Alert 101)

\* **Peter Gill**, who supplied this item, notes: Colin Bennett was a grandson of John Monash. Monash wrote for the *Argus*, Melbourne, on occasions in the mid-1890s, using the pseudonym "Equity".

#### 109.4.6 National Archives steps out on digital path

The National Archives has struck a deal to take the first step in digitising its collection. The \$1.4 million contract with digital preservation platform Preservica is the first step towards digitising the archives, a process which in its entirety is expected to take decades. National Archives director-general David Fricker said there was already a swathe of content amounting to five petabytes, or five million gigabytes (*Canberra Times*, 22 August 2020, p.11).



## 5-RECENTLY PUBLISHED

### 109.5.1 Books

**Hannay, Elliot**, *The Colt With no Regrets: A Memoir*, Wilkinson Publishing, 304pp. \$29.99. Former north Queensland daily newspaper editor writes a memoir of his life in regional journalism. Reviewed by Chris Mitchell, *Weekend Australian*, 18-19 July 2020 (Review, p.17).

**Robinson, Robin C.**, *Playing the Bones along the Inky Way; Len Bourne, Newspaperman*, self-published, Bedfordale, WA, 2020. 90pp. Price, \$20. Author is at robinr@inet.net.au/ She says: "I have published my 90-page book on the life of my grandfather Leonard Alfred Bourne, who began as a compositor in Moonta, SA, and became a printer and journalist on a variety of WA (mainly country) newspapers from ca 1900-1944. He began his own newspaper in Corrigin in 1930. The book covers his family life, his time and writings on those papers and his very active community life in the various country towns."

### 109.5.2 Articles

**Editorial**, "Of public interest", *Saturday Paper*, 4 July 2020, p.12. An editorial arguing that journalists should be able to report on alleged war crimes; that such reporting passes the "public interest" test.

**Hayman-Reber, Madeline**, "Remaking news", *Saturday Paper*, 18-24 July 2020, p.5. For Aboriginal journalists our jobs don't finish when we leave the office for the day. We never get to switch off. We are constantly held to account by our family and community.

**Kohler, Alan**, "Media deal could backfire", *Australian*, 4 August 2020, p.21. Publishers should be careful what they wish for—from Google, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Also: "High stakes in media play", *Australian*, 11 August 2020, p.21. Builds on the above Kohler article.

**Mitchell, Chris**, "China is the biggest story in the world, so let's make sure we tell it right", *Australian*, 7 September 2020, p.20.

**Park, Sora, and Fisher, Caroline**, 'Here is the news (good and bad) for local readers', *Inside Story*, 13 August 2020. Despite the shaky business model, the thirst for local news hasn't gone away in regional Australia.

**Reynolds, Fiona**, "Does journalism really need its own degree?" *Canberra Times*, 12 July 2020, p.13. Let's bring back the cadetship—and avoid sending another flood of graduates into the arms of the PR industry.

**Toohy, Brian**, "Trading on your information", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 August 2020, p.13. There are serious concerns over a new data exchange deal with the US and other "like-minded" countries.

**Wake, Alexandra**, "Blocking your news will harm democracy", *Newcastle Herald*, 3 September 2020, p.17. A journalism lecturer discusses Facebook's adverse reaction to the proposed government action to require Facebook and Google, etc., to pay for access to journalism already published.

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