

The literary staff (the journalists) of the *Telegraph*, a Brisbane daily, in 1916. This image is held by the State Library of Queensland in its John Oxley Library. The caption provided is incomplete. Back row: K. G. McGill, Miss Edith ..., A. Sowden. Second row: W. Kelly, Andy Clydesdale, F. J. Bryan, J. Casser Smith, P. Luney, Douglas Dunn. Third row (seated): [No details given, but the central person—white hair, white pointed beard—is George Woolnough, editor.] Front row: S. Wanmer, John... The image is available through Trove. See ANHG 107.4.1 below to learn more about Miss Edith and the editor.

## AUSTRALIAN NEWSPAPER HISTORY GROUP

# NEWSLETTER

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

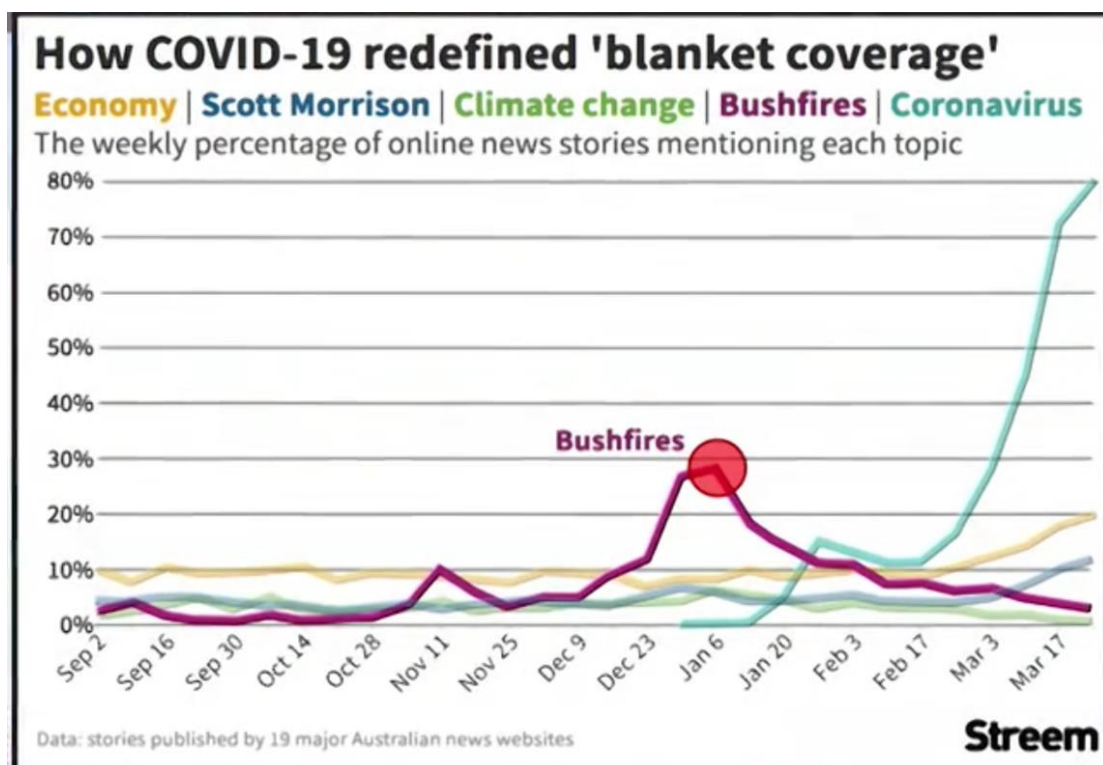


## 107.1.1 Best of times, worst of times

**Rod Kirkpatrick** writes: The best of times, the worst of times; with a nod to Charles Dickens, that could be a newspaper owner’s succinct slant on COVID-19.

**Background:** On 31 December 2019 the World Health Organisation (WHO) was informed of an outbreak of respiratory disease in China affecting the city of Wuhan in Hubei province. The spread of this coronavirus disease around the world was labelled a “Public Health Emergency of International Concern” on 30 January 2020. The WHO announced a name for the disease on 11 February 2020: COVID-19. On 11 March the WHO upgraded the status of the COVID-19 outbreak from epidemic to pandemic.

**The best of times?** Paul Barry (*Media Watch*, 30 March) said, “Coronavirus is the only story [Australians] are interested in. If you thought bushfires dominated the news in summer, think again.” Bushfire coverage at its peak grabbed just under 30 per cent of the attention of 19 major Australian news websites whereas coronavirus had hit 80 per cent by mid-March (Stroom, 27 March 2020—see Stroom graph below). News Corp Australia said, “No story we’ve ever told has been so big, so quick to evolve or so widespread. The media’s role has rarely been more critical than in this era of fake news.” For the whole of March, the front-page “main” story in every issue of the *Australian* was centred on coronavirus, as the ANHG table on Page 4 shows. By 15 April the only time another issue had led Page 1 since 27 February was when the High Court quashed the child-sex abuse convictions of Cardinal George Pell (*Australian*, 8 April).



The *Australian* boasted on 15 April that it had more than doubled its online audience (to 4.9 million), making it the No. 1 subscriber-only news site in the nation. Its March audience was 101 per cent larger than its February audience. On 6 April, News Corp Australia said in a full-page ad. in the *Australian*: “At News Corp Australia, total readership is up 81 per cent. Consumer subscription sales are up 287 per cent (versus the same week last year). This increase is the most dramatic we have ever seen. Supermarkets are selling out of our papers and home delivery orders are surging.”

**The worst of times?** The shutdown enforced on many business during the social isolation measures employed by government to help curb the spread of COVID-19 has ripped the heart out of advertising revenues and led to the closure, at least temporarily, of 70 suburban newspapers in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth, two regional dailies and about 150 non-daily country and community newspapers across Australia (see ANHG 107.3.1 and 107.3.2 below).



***Australian*, 23 March 2020.**

**Gathering momentum:** The coronavirus crisis coverage took a few weeks to gather momentum. On 27 January the *Australian* led Page 1 with “Aussie kids in virus trap” and the next day with “Schools isolate students in danger of China virus”. In February, nine issues of the *Australian*, including two of the *Weekend Australian*, led Page 1 with a coronavirus report (1-2, 5, 6, 14, 19, 20, 27, and 28 February and 29 Feb./1 March). The weekday issues were all 32-pages.

The table I have created on the next page gives the headlines when a coronavirus story led Page 1 during March (as it did each issue). Once the epidemic had been declared a pandemic, the usual banner above pages devoted to virus news was “COVID-19 PANDEMIC”. During the month the size of the newspapers gradually declined, falling from 32 to 28 pages on 19 March, with the odd minor fluctuation, and to 24 pages on 30 March. The table has a column that records the number of pages labelled each day as carrying nothing but virus news. But this must be qualified with the observation that in many issues of the paper all of the front page, all of the back page and some of the stories on inside sports pages reported the impact of COVID-19 on different spheres of life (the

sporting calendar: for instance, whether the Australian Football League or the National Rugby League would play with or without crowds, or play at all; whether the Tokyo Olympics would proceed this year or be postponed to 2021). In addition, the major feature article in the paper would often be inspired by COVID-19, as would the editorials, editorial cartoon and many of the letters to the editor, and as would some articles in the business pages. Full-page ads became the means by which banks, supermarkets and the government communicated their messages about the impact of COVID-19. There were days when up to six or even 10 full-page ads. appeared.

News Corp Australia boss Michael Miller was assured by government that news media would be deemed an essential service in the event of further shutdowns as the media company opened up its paywalls for metro mastheads during the global crisis (*Australian*, 30 March 2020).

In a bid to keep Australians better informed during the COVID-19 crisis, News Corp lifted the paywalls on its metro mastheads, including the *Daily Telegraph*, *Herald Sun* and *Courier-Mail*, to new customers signing up by mid-April. They were given free access for 28 days (and sometimes via free access to a suburban paper, such as the *Progress Leader*, Blackburn) and 50 per cent off for the following month.

The following table provides a more detailed breakdown of the *Australian*’s coverage during March of COVID-19.

**Table 1 COVID-19 news coverage in the *Australian*, March 2020**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Page 1 'main' on COVID-19</b>	<b>Full pages of labelled coverage</b>	<b>Sidelights</b>
2 March	Virus strikes: first Aussie dies	1	32-page paper.
3 March	Doctor caught in virus firing line	2	32-page paper.
4 March	Bank rates cut amid levy fears	1	32-page paper.
5 March	Economy on brink of reverse	2	32-page paper.
6 March	School shut after virus infects teen	3	34-page paper.
7-8 March	Tax breaks, cash to ease virus panic	4	
9 March	Surplus lost in \$10bn virus rescue operation	2	32-page paper. Aussies win women's cricket T20 World Cup .
10 March	Fast cash to calm virus storm	3	32-page paper.
11 March	Morrison's clinical reaction	5	32-page paper. WHO declares a pandemic..
12 March	PM's cash splash to save jobs	3	32-page paper.
13 March	Stay clam and keep spending	6	32-page paper.
14-15 March	War cabinet to tackle virus	10	
16 March	Virus puts nation on 'war footing'	5	32-page paper. Two full-page Australian Government ads related to COVID-19.
17 March	Economic dose of medicine	5	32-page paper.
18 March	Operation Covid: save jobs	6	32-page paper. Three full-page ads.
19 March	Filled page 1	5	28-page paper. One Business page and the full back page (sport), all COVID-19.
20 March	EXTRAORDINARY TIMES	7	28-page paper. One full-page ad (NAB).
21/22 March	Life in the time of corona	17	This total (17) includes some Business pages and features. Three full-page ads.
23 March	A NATION IN SHUTDOWN	5	28-page paper. AFL season suspended 22/3, & NRL suspended 23/3
24 March	Echoes of Great Depression	6	28-page paper.
25 March	BBQ ban: social life 'not ok'	6	28-page paper. Number of sports pages reduced from 3 to 2. Editor-in-chief writes letter to readers. Two full-page ads.
26 March	Let's stick together, says PM	6	28-page paper. Tokyo 2020 Olympics postponed until 2021. Sport pages: 2. Four full-page ads.
27 March	Retail rescue: rent, tax relief	5	28-page paper. Sports pages: 2. Five full-page ads inspired by COVID-19.
28-29 March	Army to police quarantine	12	The Travel section, normally 12 tabloid pages, reduced to 4 pages.
30 March	New social order: three's a crowd	4	24-page paper. Two full-page ads (Coles, pp.2-3).
31 March	DEPRESSION BUSTER	5	24-page paper. Three full-page ads.

### **107.1.2 Newspaper staffs working from home, some sections suspended**

Brisbane's *Courier-Mail* reported (28 March 2020) that it was now being produced from kitchen tables and spare bedrooms across the state as its newsrooms worked from home for the first time in its history. The four daily editorial news conferences were being held by video conference, designers were producing pages on their dining tables, and reporters and photographers are scattered across the state, filing their stories and pictures remotely. The latest data showed increases in subscriptions, audience and retail sales of the newspaper. Digital page views had soared to a record 15.1 million in the previous week. The paper had launched a new daily liftout called "HiberNation" to deliver practical tips for "your home and family on how to get through the shutdown".

It was the same at other newspapers such as the *Australian*, the *Daily Telegraph*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Melbourne Age*, and the *Saturday Paper* (see “Divided we stand: remote newsrooms get the job done”, *Australian*, 30 March 2020, p.19). On 19 March the *Age* was put together remotely for the first time in its 165-year history. All editorial staff worked from home.

On 31 March, Nine Entertainment announced it would be suspending some sections and liftouts in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Age* and *Australian Financial Review*. These include: *Boss Magazine*, *Sophisticated Traveller*, *Luxury Magazine*, *Good Food*, and *Executive Style*. *Traveller* and *Domain* have also been suspended. Impacted journalists have been redeployed. Sections will be reinstated as conditions improve (*Telum Media Alert*, 1 April 2020).

Nine said it would cut bonuses and would force staff to take leave, and put off casual staff. It did not rule out more job cuts, after telling the market it would aim to save \$266 million this year. On 1 April, Seven West Media chief executive James Warburton told staff they would need to take a 10-20 per cent pay cut and move to a four-day week. Seven West Media publishes the Perth daily, the *West Australian*, and most of the regional papers in WA. News Corp Australia has also flagged job losses and pay cuts. Schwartz Media expects “in the short term, a third of the revenue we use to make our titles will likely disappear” (*Saturday Paper*, 21-27 March 2020).

### 107.1.3 Introducing the *Corona Times*

Extract from Trent Dalton’s “Tales from the [COVID-19] bunker” series, *Weekend Australian Magazine*, 25-26 April 2020, p.12: “Eleven-year-old Emily in Holland Park, south Brisbane, escapes into words. She’s created her own newspaper, the *Corona Times*. Publisher, editor-in-chief, chief reporter, fashion editor. She delivers the *Corona Times* to letterboxes in her street each week. Cracking read. Updates on street activities. A joke of the week. Neighbour of the week: ‘Mia from No. 25 is nine years old and goes to Holland Park State School. She has a red cattle dog named Miley who will turn 11 this year. Mia plays guitar and likes to ride her skateboard and play soccer. She recently got back from Japan so her school told her to stay home for two weeks.’

“Emily’s fashion tips are the talk of the street: ‘Denim on denim is a classic look that is comfortable and impressive, so there is no doubt you will look fabulous while working from home. Achieve a classic yet classy look by wearing reflective sunglasses with metal trim. You can model this look while mowing the lawn or weeding the garden since you can’t go anywhere else.’ Emily writes and writes from her bunker; week in, week out, and so makes her great escape from COVID-19.”

### 107.1.4 AAP closure (1): End of newswire after 85 years

National news agency Australian Associated Press will close its doors on 26 June after operating for 85 years (*Australian Financial Review*, 3 March 2020). More than 180 editorial staff will be hit by the close of its newswire and hundreds from other parts of the company to be affected by the sales of various divisions and setting up of new businesses. The company said the decision was made because AAP was “no longer viable to continue”, and its largest shareholders News Corp and Nine decided to pull the plug as they continue searching for cost savings amid a challenging media environment.

AAP chief executive Bruce Davidson told staff on 3 March that the AAP newswire will be closed, and the Medianet PR business and Mediaverse analytics business will be sold. Sources told the *Financial Review* that changes will affect 500 individual staff members and 100 contractors, via the shutdown of AAP newswire, the sale of Medianet and Mediaverse, and the potential setting up of a new production entity. Staff entitlements are secure, sources said.

Staff were told there may be “opportunities for AAP staff at Nine and News [Corp]” and some of the affected staff may find jobs in a new production entity. Davidson said AAP executives had been aware of the decision to close the business for nearly three months, with the final call being made in December. “AAP has been a critical part of journalism in Australia since 1935, and it is tragic that it will come to an end,” he said. “Hundreds of wonderful journalists made their start at AAP and went on to brilliant careers. Many others chose to stay with the agency for several decades and are part of the revered ‘AAP family’.”

Nine, News Corp, Seven West Media and Australian Community Media, owned by Antony Catalano, are AAP’s major shareholders. Nine and News Corp are the largest shareholders and

are believed to put about \$5 million and \$10 million respectively into the business every year. AAP has provided newswire service across a broad range of topics, including general news, courts, politics, finance, entertainment, travel, racing and sport. The final day of AAP will be 26 June, while Pagemasters will close 31 August.

AAP chairman and News Corp group executive of corporate affairs, policy and government relations, Campbell Reid, said: “For generations AAP has been journalism’s first responder. Its reporters, photographers and production staff have accurately recorded the first cut of contemporary Australian history and the nation is in their debt,” he said. “It is a great loss that professional and researched information provided by AAP is being substituted with the un-researched and often inaccurate information that masquerades as real news on the digital platforms.”

AAP said the decision was forced by a decline in the number of media companies paying for the service in recent years and the impact of digital platforms taking other people’s content and distributing it for free.

### **107.1.5 AAP closure (2): Explanation**

The *Australian* editorialised on the AAP closure (6 March 2020, p.15): The upcoming closure of Australian Associated Press — the nation’s news wire — after 85 years of good service needs to be understood by the Morrison government as a serious and overdue wake-up call. The closure of the agency that has been the “first responder” of Australian journalism since Joseph Lyons was prime minister and Don Bradman was batting should also concern every citizen with an interest in politics, finance, the courts, coronavirus, national security, the environment, travel and the world in general. AAP has been known for its timely, factual and comprehensive reporting. Those with most to lose from its closure, ironically, are the naive, complacent individuals, who blithely say they’re happy “to get all the news from social media” and would never think to pay for quality news coverage.

What they get on social media, in reality, is a skewed mishmash of content pilfered from newspapers and broadcasters, and filtered through the tech giants’ opaque echo chambers. Across time, such a pattern will produce a less informed society, less engaged in our vibrant democracy. On [4 March], AAP chairman Campbell Reid, who is also a News Corp Australia senior executive, pinpointed the reason the wire service was closing. The detrimental impact of digital platforms on media companies had reached a tipping point, he said. The unfettered market power of Google and Facebook and the significant imbalance in bargaining power had devastated media business models. Tech giants were taking and not paying for vast swaths of content produced by media companies and using it to generate billions of advertising dollars. “That is at the heart of why AAP is closing. No one should kid themselves otherwise. Until the platforms start paying publishers for their journalism instead of distributing it for free for their own profit then we are going to, sadly, see a lot more bad news in the media sector.”

### **107.1.6 AAP closure (3): Accuracy more important than speed**

**John Coomber** writes (*Weekend Australian*, 7-8 March 2020, p.21): When I first walked through the doors of AAP’s old head office beside Sydney’s Wynyard station in July 1972, the first thing that struck me was the noise. In a spartan room with a low ceiling, more than 100 teleprinters were going hammer and tongs, receiving news from across the world and sending foreign and domestic news across Australia, including to its Antarctic bases, and even to ships at sea. Each of them was driven by precisely-rolled coils of perforated paper tape — the fabled ticker tape once showered on parades on Wall Street.

At desks surrounded by banks of those infernal, clacking machines sat a few dozen men — there were no female journalists back then — adding to the din by banging at typewriters and shouting into telephones. Others were editing reports on the war in Vietnam or the break-in at the Watergate building a few weeks earlier. AAP subscribed to Reuters, the Associated Press, Agence France-Presse, United Press International, Britain’s Press Association, and the New Zealand Press Association, among others. Added to this were its own correspondents in, at various times, London, New York, Jakarta, Port Moresby, Singapore, Suva, Saigon, Wellington, Los Angeles, Beijing. Plus every state and territory in Australia.

The completed stories were propelled on a conveyor belt to teleprinter operators who, using sublime keyboard skills, converted them to tape. When it had finished running at the breakneck speed of 40 words a minute to one newspaper, it would be rewound by hand and sent to another. In a dark corner of the office, generally in the dead of night, white-haired operators sent the Antarctic and “Shippress” bulletins by Morse code.

I was 20 years old, fresh out of a cadetship at the Brisbane *Telegraph*, an afternoon newspaper long since gone the way it seems AAP is now to follow. That scene in Wynyard House sent a surge of excitement through me that I have never forgotten. Nor have I forgotten the words the editor, Lyall Rowe, said to me that day. “Remember this, son: speed is essential, but accuracy is more important.” Those eight words were the mantra by which we all worked. And within them existed the unspoken notion of integrity and independence.

[John Coomber contributed various sections to the 75-year history of AAP published in 2010, *On the Wire: The Story of Australian Associated Press*.]

### **107.1.7 AAP closure (4): Chairman’s perspective**

From the *Australian*, 9 March 2020: The ABC’s *Media Watch* program sought answers about the closure of AAP from its chairman Campbell Reid (a senior executive of News Corp Australia). These are his responses.

**Media Watch:** Did News consider different ownership options for AAP to continue operations?

**Reid:** The decisions about the future of the company were made by the directors of AAP, not one of the shareholders. The management and directors of AAP have been confronting the decline in the use of the newswire service for many years. The answer to the question of ownership structures is that, yes, several sustainable operations within the AAP portfolio will be sold or restructured so they can continue as viable businesses. The newswire was not formally offered for sale because without the cash support of its major shareholders and declining use and revenue from other companies, the directors’ view was that it was no longer a sustainable business. That said, if someone wanted to make an offer, there is nothing stopping them.

**Media Watch:** Why were clients kept in the dark about the closure and not given the opportunity to change their investment to potentially make it more viable?

**Reid:** The plans for the closure were, unfortunately, published before all the planned communications could be carried out. That is a risk when you are making decisions involving media companies that employ journalists. It’s their job to publish stories and they did so. Regarding the opportunity for clients to change their investment, the inescapable fact is that over the last decade a large number of AAP’s newswire customers have cancelled or reduced their spend, bringing it to the point it faces today. Those companies already had the opportunity to support the business more enthusiastically and had chosen not to.

**Media Watch:** Did News have concerns that AAP subscribers were using the service to compete with News properties with free-to-access publications?

**Reid:** AAP was founded 85 years ago by companies who were in daily competition with each other and none of its current shareholders are scared of fair competition today. What they are all confronting is the unfair raiding of our valuable content by the tech platforms and they are the organisations that, more than any others, could have helped save AAP if they had accepted, as they should have years ago, that they should be paying for the use of content produced by others.

**Media Watch:** Did News want AAP closed to stifle rival publishers and broadcasters?

**Reid:** Categorically and empathically not.

### **107.1.8 AAP closure (5): News Corp aims for June wire launch**

News Corp Australia is aiming to be ready to launch a newswire service by the end of June (*Australian*, 20 April 2020). It is casting the net for staff in most major capitals and is seeking an editor-in-chief to head the enterprise. Mel Mansell, who is heading the project going by the title of NCA NewsWire, said the wire service would be a “back-to-basics” operation focusing on the fundamentals of reporting.

### **107.1.9 AAP closure (6): Attempts to buy the business**

**19 March 2020:** Management of Australian Associated Press is in talks with several parties who had expressed an interest in buying the entire business that is set to close in June (*Australian*, 19 March 2020). AAP's chief executive Bruce Davidson sent a note to staff on 19 March notifying them that the newswire has been approached in recent days by several unidentified parties interested in buying the newswire service, as well as the profitable arms of the business Pagemasters and Medianet. "This development was not expected by either management, the AAP Board or the AAP shareholders. AAP's shareholders have now asked me to enter into discussions with the interested parties to determine if any of these approaches offers a credible and sustainable future for AAP," he wrote to staff. Davidson cautioned staff about being overly optimistic about the latest development, but has paused the redundancy timetable with the business due to close on June 26 at the expense of journalists' jobs.

**23 March 2020:** Pollster and media researcher Gary Morgan has revealed himself as a potential buyer of Australian Associated Press (*Australian*, 23 March 2020). Following news that "unidentified parties" had approached AAP management about buying the company, the executive chairman of Roy Morgan Research told the *Australian* he would be interested in buying the business. "Absolutely I'm interested. Roy Morgan is in the information business," Morgan said. While potential buyers have expressed interest in AAP's profitable arms — press release service Medianet and subediting business Pagemasters — Morgan claims he is interested in buying the entirety of the business if it is viable.

Morgan said AAP "could work in his stable of businesses", which include polling and daily news and audience tracking services, but he wouldn't know whether it was a viable business proposition "until we look under the bonnet". The *Australian* understands the owner of Private Media and chair of Solstice Media, Eric Beecher, is also running the ruler over the AAP business. Any new owner of AAP would have to do without its two biggest clients and current majority shareholders, Nine Entertainment and News Corp, as customers and shareholders.

### **107.1.10 AAP closure (7): Tiffen says a news agency is still needed**

Rodney Tiffen, emeritus professor of politics at the University of Sydney, has written in the digital magazine, *Inside Story*, about the continuing need for a news agency such as AAP. His article began:

Reuters, Britain's oldest surviving news agency, traces its founding back to 1851. But the pivotal date in its development was 1858, the year it launched its "electric news" service, which had been made possible by the invention of the telegraph in the early 1840s. In the age of the internet, it is easy to forget how radical an innovation the telegraph was. The great journalist and media analyst, Ben Bagdikian, put it succinctly:

From prehistoric times to the nineteenth century, messages of substance could travel no faster than a more or horse could run, a pigeon could fly, or a boat could sail... The most spectacular leap in communications came when message transmission was separated from transportation. The telegraph, sending messages with the speed of light, had a social, economic, and cultural impact comparable to that of television a century later.

Tiffen's article concluded: One promising option is for the government to fund, or partially fund, a non-profit wholesaler of news, which will provide its subscribers with a product they can reproduce and build on as they wish — in other words, a news agency. It could build on the shell of AAP, or it could be an extended service assigned to the ABC, or it could be a whole new organisation. The agency would not aim to produce spectacular or investigative reporting. Rather, it would produce the routine but essential journalism, free of commercial pressures, that aids accountability and can be built on by other journalists.

Reuters and others news agencies were born and thrived thanks to the telegraph and the growing news market. Will the rise of the internet and the shrinking revenue of legacy news media signal their end? If so, it would be a huge loss to democracy. Former US president Barack Obama once observed that the new media ecosystem "means everything is true and nothing is true." In democratic debates in the past, he added, "there was a baseline of facts that we could all work off



of. And now we just don't have that." It seems unlikely that market forces will by themselves ever fulfil the unspectacular but essential role of supplying a strong bedrock of reporting and routine disclosure that will aid and discipline democratic debate.

See ANHG 5.2 below for full details of Tiffen article, and a Johanna Leggatt article.

### 107.1.11 Recent events

#### 107.1.11.1 Deaths

**Blackbourn, Raymond George:** D. 19 March 2020 in Melbourne, aged 93; joined Melbourne *Age* in 1942 as a photographer; served in war and nearly did not survive; photographer at *Age* for 30 years and pictorial editor for 17 years; Michael Smith says perhaps Blackbourn's most significant achievement was building creative bridges between photographers and reporters insisting that his photographers collaborate with reporters to get the best result; a great picture could push a story onto the front page and a great story could bring forward a photograph to the front; Smith says Blackbourn was part of the *Age's* renaissance from the 1960s when bold use of photographs was an important part of the mix that transformed the *Age* into one of the world's best newspapers; Blackbourn's most vivid memories were of royal tours, the plum job for photographers in Australia's Menzies era; he told Kathleen Whelan for her book *Photography of The Age* (2014) his front-page picture of Ron Clarke carrying the Olympic torch around the MCG in 1956 led to an invitation from the Duke of Edinburgh to take photographs of his touring party on the royal yacht the next evening (*Age*, 6 April 2020, p.33).

**Hicks, Ian:** D. 16 February 2020 in Hobart, aged 75; entered journalism at the *Advertiser*, Adelaide, in 1961 as a copy boy; won a national writing prize for cadet journalists, the Montague Grover Award, in 1964; was sent to Canberra in 1966 as part of the Herald and Weekly Times Parliamentary Reporting Team; joined the *Sydney Morning Herald* in Canberra in late 1966, and after almost three years was posted to Port Moresby in 1969 as staff correspondent in Papua New Guinea for the *SMH* and the *Age*; three years later was appointed to the *SMH* feature/leader writing team; in 1975 was appointed staff correspondent in North America for the *SMH*, based in Washington DC; coverage included the US Bicentenary and the Montreal Olympics; returned to Sydney at the end of 1977 as chief of staff; between 1980 and 2001 held senior positions including business editor, assistant editor, managing editor and editorial manager; highlights included organising the *SMH's* coverage of the 1988 Australian Bicentenary and in 1981 the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of the *SMH*; he always reckoned the best assignments of that period were two terms totalling five years, as literary editor: "Quite simply the choicest job in Australian journalism." He chaired the Sydney Writers' Festival. His book reviewing which started with the *Advertiser* and the *Canberra Times* and continued with the *SMH*; in 2001, took early retirement with the diagnosis of Parkinson's disease; expanded his huge library of books and music, and maintained his passion for music, as a patron of both the Sydney and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras; moved to Hobart in 2008 (thanks to Mike Rosel; also see *Age*, 26 March 2020, p.34).

### 107.1.12 Police media-source plan under attack

A plan drawn up by the Australian Federal Police and the Department of Home Affairs threatens to breach human rights by forcing journalists to incriminate themselves and confidential sources (writes **Chris Merritt**, *Australian*, 11 March 2020, p.8). The plan also risks destroying the trust between journalists and their employers by forcing media organisations to search newsrooms and turn over documents to the police that could identify reporters' confidential sources. This assessment has been prepared by the media industry's Right to Know coalition, which says the proposal from the AFP and the Department of Home Affairs is fundamentally flawed and might not survive a constitutional challenge. The plan, made public in February, would give the AFP an extra method of extracting confidential information from media by serving media organisations and reporters with a "notice to produce".

The scheme was outlined by the AFP and the Department of Home Affairs in a joint submission to the parliamentary joint committee on intelligence and security, which is examining the impact on press freedom of federal law enforcement. If the plan goes ahead, the Right to Know coalition has warned the committee that the impact on relationships of trust that underpin journalism could be

so destructive “news reporting may effectively come to an end”. The media industry told the inquiry it was objectionable for a journalist to be compelled to “turn in a source in this way”.

The AFP and the Department of Home Affairs told the inquiry the “notice to produce” mechanism would operate as an “alternative” to raids and would give journalists the opportunity to argue for their material to remain confidential. The Right to Know said if notices to produce were served on media organisations instead of reporters, it would require employers to assist in the investigation and ultimately the prosecution of their journalists or their sources. “The prospect of that occurring would fundamentally destroy the relationship between a journalist and their employer, and would prevent individual journalists from fully and effectively engaging with their employers on matters such as editorial guidance, fact checking, intra-journalist collaboration and the like. “It would deny journalists the ability to use corporate computers, servers and work telephones — that is, to do their jobs,” the Right to Know submission says.

### **107.1.13 Court rulings on AFP raids on Smethurst and ABC**

**Smethurst:** The High Court has found that the Australian Federal Police’s raid on the home of News Corp journalist Annika Smethurst in June 2019 was illegal (*Australian*, 16 April 2020). But AFP Commissioner Reece Kershaw failed on 15 April to rule out prosecute Smethurst. In a win for News Corp and Smethurst, the High Court on 15 April unanimously ruled there should be an order quashing the “invalid” warrant used to raid Smethurst’s home. See also Chris Merritt, “Warrant-raid win is a hollow victory for freedom of press”, *Australian*, 16 April 2020, p.8.

**ABC:** A search warrant authorising the Australian Federal Police raid on the ABC’s Sydney headquarters was legally valid, a Federal Court judge has ruled. The decision was released by Justice Wendy Abraham in Sydney on 17 February. In a 103-page judgment, Justice Abraham comprehensively dismissed the ABC’s legal bid to overturn the warrant and ordered the broadcaster to pay costs (*Sydney Morning Herald* and *Age*, 18 February 2020).

### **107.1.14 Editor laid off at *Sunday Times***

Seven West Media has laid off Michael Beach, the editor of its *Sunday Times*, Perth, as part of a cost-cutting program during the COVID-19 crisis. Seven’s editor-in-chief, Anthony De Ceglie, has told staff that Beach’s position has been made “redundant due to the financial impact of COVID-19” and the editor would leave the business as part of a restructure.

### **107.1.15 Study of domestic abuse takes prize**

Investigative journalist Jess Hill has won the \$50,000 Stella Prize for Australian women’s literature for her *See What You Made Me Do*, a nonfiction exploration of what she sees as a “national emergency”: domestic abuse (*Australian*, 15 April 2020). Sydney-based Hill, a two-time Walkley Award winner, has devoted herself to researching domestic abuse since 2014.

The Stella was announced on 14 April via a digital broadcast hosted by ABC radio presenter Patricia Karvelas and with a speech by former prime minister Julia Gillard. In her book Hill tells the stories of victims — and perpetrators. She says the question should not be “Why didn’t she leave?” but “Why did he do it?”.

### **107.1.16 Bauer halts some mags but completes deal with SevenWest**

Bauer Media will temporarily suspend publishing some of its magazines, understood to include *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Elle*, *OK!* and *NW*, as part of restructuring plans, as the coronavirus crisis wipes out its advertising revenue (*Australian*, 30 April 2020). The move will affect up to 140 staff, with 70 to be laid off and a similar number stood down, the embattled publisher said in a brief statement on 29 April. The announcement came just weeks after Bauer shuttered its operations in New Zealand and less than 24 hours after it cancelled the Logie Awards, the biggest annual event in the Australian television industry’s calendar. Bauer, whose *TV Week* magazine is the main sponsor of the Logies, made the surprise announcement on 28 April. Bauer wrapped up its acquisition of SevenWest Media’s Pacific Magazines division for \$40m on 1 May, after the parties had extended the original deadline earlier in April. The deal, which was struck last October before the economic crisis, results in Bauer’s 36 titles, including the *Australian Women’s Weekly* and *Woman’s Day*, coming together with Pacific’s roughly 20 mastheads such as *New Idea* and *That’s Life!*

### **107.1.17 Grant boosts criticism of Australian expression**

The *Sydney Morning Herald* has said it will significantly increase the depth and range of its arts criticism and reviews thanks to a grant from The Copyright Agency and the Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism and Ideas (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 February 2020, p.3). The additional funding of \$150,000 is being shared between Nine's metropolitan publications, including the *Age*, and News Corp's *Australian*. The grant will result in an additional 100 reviews of Australian work in the *Herald* and the *Age* covering visual arts, theatre and books.

### **107.1.18 Poet's column begins**

Award winning poet and writer Sarah Holland-Batt began an Australian poetry column, "Poet's Voice", in the Review section of the *Weekend Australian* on 21-22 March 2020. World Poetry Day was on 21 March. See ANHG 106.1.17.

### **107.1.19 Joanne McCarthy says goodbye to journalism**

In the concluding part of an article containing her farewell to journalism, **Joanne McCarthy**, Gold Walkley winner in 2013, writes (*Newcastle Herald*, 4 April 2020, p.3): "It's been willpower since late 2016 that's kept me working as a journalist, dealing with two extremely demanding areas—the twin tragedies of institutional child sexual abuse and the abuse of Australian women implanted with pelvic mesh devices, that's been not much more than one long experiment on women's bodies by doctors and device manufacturers within a disgracefully compliant health system. That willpower has gone and I resigned last week after 40 years as a journalist. I'm not ill. There's no other job in the wings. This is just a job that requires—demands—motivation. And when it's gone, it's gone."

Joanne McCarthy led the *Newcastle Herald*'s campaign for a royal commission into institutional child sex abuse. She filed countless stories through years of fearless investigative reporting under the headline 'Shine the Light'. Go to the following link to read those archived stories:

<https://www.newcastleherald.com.au/shine-the-light/>

### **107.1.20 More contempt charges over Pell case dropped**

The Victorian Director of Public Prosecutions has now dropped more than half the original 205 charges filed against journalists and media outlets alleging contempt of court over reporting on the Cardinal George Pell trial for child sexual abuse at Melbourne's St Patrick's Cathedral and the guilty verdict. A total of 105 charges have been dropped and 100 are continuing (*Australian*, 14 February 2020, p.4). Cardinal Pell's convictions were quashed by the High Court, 7-0, in a judgment delivered on 7 April 2020.

### **101.1.21 Publication details**

Following on from ANHG 106.1.6, which contained "publication details" for the *Australian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, as published in those papers. Please note: Currently Monday to Friday issues of the *Sydney Morning Herald* are printed by News Limited in Sydney and Brisbane. Saturday's issues are printed at North Richmond, Canberra, Newcastle and Ormiston Qld. The *Sun-Herald* is printed by News Limited in Sydney and Brisbane and in Newcastle and Canberra. The former Fairfax Media print site at 56-68 Delancey Street, Ormiston (Brisbane), of 5.19 hectares, was sold in June 2019 for \$7.425 million. Plans were in hand to convert the site into a state-of-the-art medical precinct for the people of Redland City.

### **107.1.22 Victory for towns and journalism**

The *Sydney Morning Herald* editorialised on 12 March 2020: "The settlement worth \$212 million announced yesterday in three class actions brought against the Department of Defence over chemical pollution of hundreds of homes around military bases is a huge win for the plaintiffs. The payments will compensate residents of three sites, including Williamstown in NSW, Katherine in the Northern Territory and Oakey in Queensland, whose properties were contaminated by per- and poly-fluoroalkyl (PFAS), a toxic foam used by the RAAF in fire drills... this is also, in a small way, a win for the *Herald* and *Newcastle Herald*, both formerly part of Fairfax Media. Both

mastheads helped the people of Williamstown raise the alarm at crucial times. Indeed, the fact that this public campaign, started in the small RAAF town north of Newcastle, has come this far shows the value of a strong media, both regionally and in the big city.”

Carrie Fellner, former *Newcastle Herald* reporter and now *SMH* “investigations reporter” was the journalist most closely involved in the reporting.

### 107.1.23 Snippets

- The “Body + Soul” liftout in the *Sunday Herald Sun* published a 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue on 23 February 2020. The issue features many health and related topics covered during the 20 years.
- From 10 February the cover price of the weekday edition of Melbourne’s *Herald Sun* rose by 10c to \$2 (*Herald Sun*, 8 February 2020, p.6).
- Malcolm Turnbull, the prime minister before Scott Morrison, has asserted that he was integral in creating an Australian edition of the Green—Left activist British website, *TheGuardian.com/* He asserts this in his book, *A Bigger Picture*. Turnbull’s extreme dislike of Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp is clear in the book (*Age*, 17 April 2020, p.2).
- Jill Baker, former editor of the *Sunday Age* and the *Sunday Herald Sun* and former group publisher at Australian Consolidated Press, has bared her soul to write *A Dog Called Harry*. It’s about losing her farmer husband of 20 years George and being confronted by breast cancer months later, and then finding meaning in loving a crazy cavoodle.



### 107.2.1 Media companies to be paid for siphoned news content

Global tech giants Google and Facebook will be forced to pay Australian media companies for siphoned news content posted on their sites under a landmark decision by the Morrison government to impose a mandatory code of conduct on digital platforms (*Australian*, 20 April 2020). The move to legislate will see Australia become the first government to impose a legal regime including financial penalties around the behaviour of the digital platforms that have used unregulated space to cannibalise and profit from content produced by the news media. The mandatory code would reverse the imbalance and force the tech companies to pay for the content they siphon from news media companies, share their consumer data and be subject to rules on the rankings of news on their platforms.

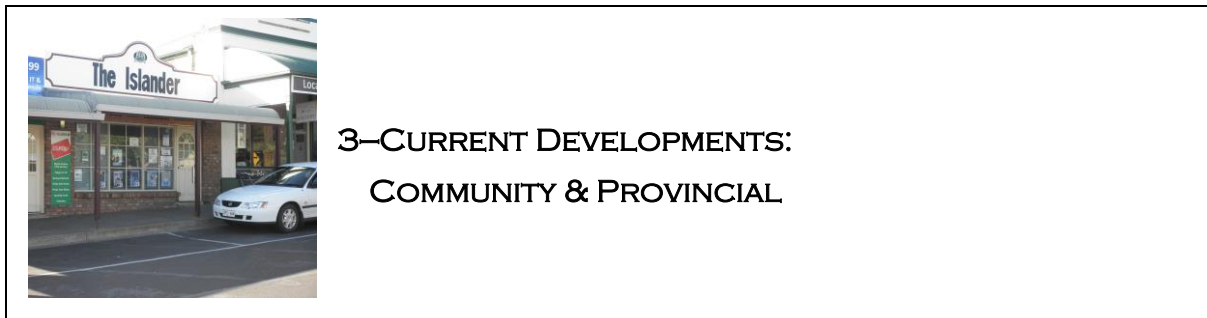
Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said the decision to accelerate the move was prompted by advice the previous week from the competition watchdog that the tech companies were dragging the chain on negotiations to reach a voluntary code by November and were unlikely to come to the table. The collapse in the advertising market since the COVID-19 outbreak has compounded the urgency of an issue that was already threatening to undermine the future of Australian journalism. The decision is a major win for traditional media companies and consumers by returning bargaining power to the news media industry, which claims it had been forced to a tipping point by the unfair practices of the global digital platforms that have been able to take and post locally produced content without paying for it. Frydenberg said the key issue was media companies that generated content, only to have it replicated for free on digital platforms, deserved to be paid for it.

### 107.2.2 Facebook usage soars, but ads dip

Facebook said in late March usage of its products was skyrocketing because of the coronavirus pandemic, but warned that increased activity wouldn’t shield the company from the online

advertising pullback roiling Silicon Valley and Madison Avenue alike (*Australian*, 26 March 2020). In a post on 24 March, Facebook said total messaging across the platform’s services has increased 50 per cent in countries hit hard by the virus, with video messaging more than doubling. In Italy, which has undertaken some of the strictest restrictions on public life of any country outside China, group video calling is up by more than 1000 per cent from a month earlier and usage of all Facebook apps is up 70 per cent. Facebook also owns Instagram as well as the popular messaging service WhatsApp.

The company said the higher usage wouldn’t protect it from expected declines in digital advertising across the globe. “We don’t monetise many of the services where we’re seeing increased engagement, and we’ve seen a weakening in our ads business in countries taking aggressive actions to reduce the spread of COVID-19,” wrote Alex Schultz, Facebook’s vice-president of analytics, and Jay Parikh, vice-president of engineering. The company didn’t provide official earnings guidance, but the executives said its business “is being adversely affected like so many others around the world”.



### **107.3.1 Closures of 2 dailies, more than 120 non-dailies and 4 print centres**

**Rod Kirkpatrick** writes: A newspaper historian for 43 years, I never dreamed I would be writing the following sentence. Two regional dailies and about 200 community and country non-dailies closed in five weeks from the final week in March. The COVID-19 crisis has not only changed the way we live, but also the way we consume news. We are being told that these newspaper closures are only temporary, but the graveyard of Australian newspapers is littered with examples over the past 180 years of newspapers that said “goodbye, for now”, as Gawler’s 157-year-old *Bunyip* did on 1 April, only to fail to return to say hello again. The Ryerson Index (a free index to death notices appearing in Australian newspapers) puts it this way on its website when referring to the current closures: “To soften the blow, publishers stated that the print version of these papers had been ‘suspended’, and printing would resume when circumstances allowed. However, it is our belief that many of these papers have now ceased to exist and will never again be printed.”

Sixty of the community papers that have ceased printing belong to News Corp Australia (see 107.3.2 below). Another 10 papers owned by the Community Newspaper Group, Perth, have ceased printing. Until 14 April, the country papers closing all belonged to three small family groups—the Lanyon family (principals of the Elliott Newspaper Group), the Giles family, and the Taylor family. These three family groups have been beacons in the regional newspaper landscape where, for instance, in NSW and Queensland so many papers are owned by the big groups, such as News Corp and Australian Community Media (ACM). And on 14 April ACM announced it was suspending printing at four print sites (Canberra, Tamworth, Wodonga and Murray Bridge) and an unstated number of non-daily newspapers (probably about 120) from 20 April to 29 June. Its 14 dailies have continued their printing.

**Details:** The Elliott Newspaper Group has stood down all its staff on its newspapers at Mildura, Swan Hill and Kerang and ceased publication in the week ending 28 March 2020. The group, however, says it is committed to reviving its printed publications when the coronavirus crisis subsides. The *Sunraysia Daily*, Mildura, reported (28 March) that the company’s directors had made the “gut-wrenching” decision on 24 March to stand down all staff under the Fair Work Act 2009 and suspend all its traditional newspaper publishing operations in the three towns. Directors and senior management met with all staff that morning to announce the decision.

The *Sunraysia Daily* began publication in October 1920. The Swan Hill paper is the *Guardian* and the Kerang paper is the *Gannawarra Times*.

“It is our current intention that when this crisis subsides that we will be able to revive our printed publications,” Elliott Group managing director Ross Lanyon said in late March. “Over recent weeks the newspapers have not received anything near the usual commercial support across all advertising sectors to remain viable as a publisher (in the interim period). This in combination with a grimmer economic outlook facing us, and the fact clients continue to cancel their spending gave us no option. It has been terribly disappointing to see many multi-national companies use metropolitan press across the nation to inform readers but ignore their readers in regional areas by not displaying those messages in the most read papers in those markets.”



The final issue of Gawler’s *Bunyip*, 1 April 2020. It was first published in 1863.

electrical apprentice in the mines. He no longer lives locally, but when he heard the paper was closed, he volunteered to put together a business plan to save it, at least once a week for now. He rang around from his base in Adelaide. The plan was simple enough: if the staff volunteered for two days a week – while they received Jobkeeper – about \$6000 in advertising would be enough to cover costs to print once a week for 12 weeks. If more advertising comes in, the staff will have their jobs back (theguardian.com.au, 16 April 2020).

In the South Australian Riverland, the Taylor Group’s *Murray Pioneer*, Renmark, absorbed the *Loxton News* and the *River News*, Waikerie, after their issues of 15 April (*Murray Pioneer*, 8 April 2020). The Taylor Group announced also that the issue of the *Bunyip*, Gawler, published on 1 April would be the last “indefinitely” because of losses caused by the pandemic. The paper had employed 12 people, including journalists, salespeople and administration staff. They have been stood down. The *Bunyip* was first published on 5 September 1863. The Barnet family owned it for its first 139 years.

**And now to ACM.** The company said on 14 April that printing operations at four press facilities and the production of a number of non-daily newspapers would be suspended from 20 April to 29 June because of the coronavirus pandemic. The big question surrounds the “number” of non-dailies. Employees associated with the print sites and newspaper titles would be stood down until the end

It is understood that the Elliott Newspaper Group has re-employed a few of the laid-off journalists to maintain a digital news presence for its papers.

In Victoria’s Gippsland region, two papers owned by the Giles family have ceased printing. The *Great Southern Star*, Leongatha, and the *Yarram Standard* published their final issue, until further notice, on 24 March. The *Yarram Standard* has been published since 1875. At Morwell, the *Latrobe Valley Express*, owned by the Elliott group, has reportedly stood down its journalists and moved to producing only a small paper with a skeleton staff.

At Broken Hill, NSW, the *Barrier Daily Truth* suspended daily printing operations from 28 March. Management, in consultation with staff, made “the difficult decision” on 27 March to give Broken Hill’s newspaper every opportunity to resume normal operations once the coronavirus crisis subsides. *BDT* staff, who were to be stood down, met on 27 March afternoon to discuss options. A rescue package has since allowed the paper to resume printing one day a week, from Good Friday, 10 April. Robert Williamson, 59, the chief operating officer of Lodestone Mines and Toll Resources, put together the package. He was born in Broken Hill, starting his working life as an

of June. Among the titles not affected by these suspensions are ACM's 14 daily newspapers (in Canberra, Newcastle, Wollongong, Tamworth, Orange, Bathurst, Dubbo, Wagga Wagga, Albury-Wodonga, Bendigo, Ballarat, Warrnambool, Burnie and Launceston), and the state-based agricultural weeklies (*Land, Stock & Land*, *Queensland Country Life*, *North Queensland Register*, *Farm Weekly* and *Stock Journal*).

Even though ACM is vague in its general announcement, it has been specific in some of the individual newspapers. For instance, in the *Maitland Mercury*, the oldest regional newspaper in NSW, ACM said via a series of announcements to staff on 14 April that the *Newcastle Herald* and *Port Stephens Examiner* would be the only survivors of the shutdown in the Hunter-Port Stephens region. The papers to close from 20 April would be: the *Maitland Mercury*, *Cessnock Advertiser*, *Singleton Argus*, *Dungog Chronicle*, *Muswellbrook Chronicle*, *Gloucester Advocate*, *Scone Advocate*, *Lakes Mail*, *Hunter Valley News* and *Newcastle Star*. They would all close until at least 29 June.

Executive chairman of ACM, Antony Catalano, said, "Regrettably, this means that for some of our employees across the business there will be no useful work available, and they will be stood down from work in accordance with the provisions of the Fair Work Act." Some other employees would be asked to reduce their hours "where there remains some limited useful work that can be performed" while company executives had already agreed to voluntary pay cuts.

Which non-daily titles would temporarily cease publishing and how many employees were affected were not disclosed as managers began to brief teams and consult with individuals. Catalano said, "At this stage it is not possible to say when we will be able to resume normal operations." Limited news coverage is continuing on websites of publications affected by the temporary shutdown. Large numbers of ACM staff had been working from home since early March as part of a company-wide response to official government directives on social distancing. In early April, ACM gave notice to the landlords of more than 30 small offices around the country that it intended to exit lease arrangements to reduce rental costs across the business.

### **107.3.2 Printing of 60 community papers suspended**

News Corp suspended printing of 60 community newspapers in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia from April 9 (*Australian*, 2 April 2020). The organisation said advertising revenues had rapidly declined after the restrictions placed on real estate auctions and home inspections, and the forced closure of event venues and dine-in restaurants during the coronavirus pandemic. A statement released by News Corp said the community mastheads would "continue to publish digitally with reporters and photographers expanding News Corp's hyper-local news coverage for consumers across Australia".

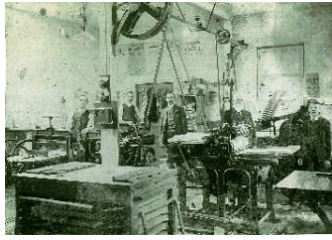
The community newspapers that will stop printing are basically: Cumberland and Courier groups (now NewsLocal), Sydney; Quest, Brisbane; Leader, Melbourne; and Messenger, Adelaide. Their titles include the *Brisbane News*, Queensland; the *Mornington Peninsula Leader*, *Moreland Leader*, *Northcote Leader*, *Preston Leader* and *Stonnington Leader* in Melbourne; and the *Manly Daily* (published Wed./Sat.), *Blacktown Advocate*, *Inner West Courier* and *Wentworth Courier* in Sydney as well as the *Central Coast Express Advocate* (published Wed./Fri.), Gosford-Wyong.

### **107.3.3 Government aid for newspapers**

A multi-million-dollar government bailout package aimed at supporting regional media through the coronavirus crisis has been welcomed by industry experts, but they say it is unclear if it will be enough to help it survive in the long term (ABC News online, 15 April 2020). The Commonwealth has announced a \$50 million package to support public interest journalism across TV, newspapers and radio in regional and remote Australia. It came a day after Australian Community Media said it would suspend publishing at its non-daily publications until at least June.

### **107.3.4 Port Macquarie: Laurie Barber's community service recognised**

Laurie Barber, a distinguished former country newspaper editor, was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the 2020 Australia Day honours list. His award was for service to the community of Port Macquarie, NSW. Barber was editor of the *Port Macquarie News*, 1982-2005.



## 4—NEWSPAPER HISTORY

### 107.4.1 Filling in the gaps: Miss Edith, and George Woolnough

**Rod Kirkpatrick** writes: I discovered the image that appears on the cover of this ANHG issue when I was searching for information about the location of the Brisbane *Telegraph* newspaper offices at different stages of its publication life (1872-1988). A caption appeared beneath the *Telegraph* staff image, but I soon noticed that the caption had gaps, some in relation to incomplete names, some in relation to no names.

**Miss Edith:** There were 16 people in the photo and only one was a woman. She was listed merely as “Miss Edith”. A search in Trove’s digitised newspapers helped me determine that she was Miss Edith Shirley, who, after working at the *Telegraph* for several years, reportedly married in May 1919 a returned serviceman, Eric Raff, who had served in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Light Horse and the 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion. He was organiser of the Dalby district for the 7<sup>th</sup> War Loan from August 1918. After their marriage, they were said to have moved to Maryborough where they were both engaged in literary work, or so said the *Sunday Times*, Sydney, 4 May 1919, p.11. That report was soon denied. A report heading the social column of the *Week, Brisbane*, 16 May 1919, p.5, stated that the *Sunday Times* report was “absolutely incorrect... Miss Shirley is not married and does not reside in Maryborough”.



Edith Shirley, 1916

Queensland’s birth, death and marriages records reveal that Edith did marry Eric, but about 15 months later than the first reported marriage. Edith May Ferrens Shirley married Eric Raff on 31 July 1920 in Holy Trinity Church, Fortitude Valley. Edith was the youngest daughter of Dr John Shirley (inspector of state schools and explorer and naturalist of note) and Mrs Shirley of “Coot-tha”, Abbotsford Road, Bowen Hills (*Week*, 6 August 1920, p.6). Dr Shirley, the first principal of the Brisbane Teachers Training College, contributed a nature column to the *Brisbane Courier* and his final column appeared three days after his death on 5 April 1922. He had dictated that column to daughter Edith while on his death bed (*Queenslander*, 15 April 1922, p.32).

Edith worked on the staffs of a daily, the *Telegraph*, and two weeklies, the *Sun* and *Truth*. She also did a lot of free-lance work. She wrote under the nom de plume of “Australia Jane” for the *Bulletin*, Sydney, contributing the Queensland column. She edited an *Australia Jane Annual* magazine, at least in 1919. Among those who contributed articles was the naturalist A.H. Chisholm (see ANHG 106.4.4), no doubt known to her father. A reviewer said there were four articles in the annual that were sure to arrest attention — namely, “The Burnett and Beyond,” “The Wreck of the Charles Eaton,” “The Queensland National Park,” and “Can the Public Win?” There were portraits and sketches of the late Premier, T. J. Ryan, and J. M. Hunter, and “little novels” varied enough to suit any taste. About a score of photograph illustrations were scattered through the magazine. At Toowoomba she represented Brisbane papers, the *Telegraph* and *Daily Mail*, at different times. Edith died on 27 March 1942 aged in her early fifties (*Telegraph*, 25 October 1919, p.16, and 27 March 1942, p.5).



**George Woolnough:** The five men in the third row from the rear of the cover photograph are unnamed, at least in the library caption. In the original appearance of the image in the *Telegraph*, however, the only text expanding on a title of “Brisbane *Telegraph* literary staff 1916” was: “Upon retirement of Mr George Woolnough, M.A., editor for 32 years” (*Telegraph*, 30 December 1916, p.13). None of the other 15 people was named, leaving the reader to guess that Woolnough was the central figure in the third row from the rear. He was actually the editor for seven months short of 32 years.

Woolnough, who was married to a sister of the mid-1880s proprietors of the newspaper, James and George Cowlshaw, was 82 when he retired from the editorship on 31 December 1916. He lived another 12½ years, dying in June 1929, aged 94. He took three months leave of absence from the editorship during an election campaign because he refused to bow to the order of the board of directors to “write William Kidston out of office” as premier. One obituary described him as a “great scholar, greater writer, great humanitarian” (*Cairns Post*, 25 June 1929, p.13).



**George Woolnough, 1916**

On 2 August 1893, a strong Woolnough-Raff family link was forged when a son of this editor, Thomas Cowlshaw Woolnough, married Margaret Cumming Raff in the drawing room of the home of the bride’s parents, Alexander Raff, MLC, and Elizabeth Raff, “Grange Hill”, Gregory Terrace.

**1874 staff:** See also “The Story of the Telegraph: From Its birth to its jubilee”, compiled and told by J.R.H. Lewis, *Telegraph*, Brisbane, 30 September 1922, p.16. This includes a *Telegraph* staff photograph taken in 1874, with a detailed caption. There were 27 people in the photo, all males, including four boys at the front (three machine-room boys and an editor’s boy). George Hall was the editor. A significant number of the men had “R” (reader) or “C” (compositor) after their name.

### 107.4.2 Stereotyping for father and son

*Telegraph*, Brisbane, 26 April 1935, p.3: Have you ever stood in a newspaper house and watched the virgin paper fed from a huge reel into a gigantic rotary press with eight outlets? If so you would have noticed that the paper flies through several sets of rollers and type cylinders, taking impressions of print on both sides, and that the paper then passes through folders and cutters, the newspapers, neatly counted and folded in quires, streaming from the eight outlets at the rate of 40,000 an hour. It is quite possible to print on a rotary press from movable type set up by a compositor, or by a linotype or monotype operator, and clamped to the cylinder in a curved frame called a “turtle”, but to set up several formes in this way is not practicable because of the time and expense involved in composition. The modern newspaper with more than a million circulation requires several rotary presses. So, from the original type forme the printer first takes a mould or matrix, from which he can obtain as many replicas as he may need. These replicas are known as stereotypes.

For the beginning of stereotyping we must go back farther than 200 years, and the story of its invention is a story of the sacrifice and martyrdom of a father and his son.

At the beginning of the 18th century there lived in Edinburgh a prosperous goldsmith named William Ged, who had apprenticed his son to a printer. At night, when the day’s work was over, father and son chatted about printing and composing type. Young James explained to his father how each metal type [letter] was taken separately from the “case” and put in a “stick” until a line or a paragraph was completed, after which it was transferred to the frame until a page or forme was filled, when it was locked up and put on the press. This process struck the elder Ged as being slow and wasteful. In the first place it entailed the use of an enormous amount of type—a very expensive item in those days. In addition, the type metal was soft; it wore out quickly, so that many formes had to be set up when large numbers of any work had to be printed. William Ged set his

fertile brain to work, with the result that in 1725 he patented an invention for casting, whole pages of type. The innovation created a sensation in the printing world. The compositors, as powerful a body of men as the Guild of Writers they displaced, were up in arms.

They saw in stereotyping what they thought to be a menace to their craft. How could they foresee that stereotyping would cheapen printing, increase the demand for all kinds of print thus making more work for compositors? Their prejudice was so bitter that Ged had to experiment in secrecy.

Neglecting his goldsmith's business to devote more time to his invention, it was not long before he found himself in financial straits, and it was only by subscriptions from faithful friends that he was able to carry on. Eventually he persuaded James's master to allow him to conduct tests in his shop after the compositors had gone home, and to allay suspicion, James left work at the usual time, returning to his master's shop when night had fallen. In the silence of the deserted shop James set up a forme with movable type, which he took home to his father. In the secrecy of his goldsmith's shop, William Ged soldered all the type together...

That tiresome task accomplished, the forme was smuggled back into the printer's shop where, again in the dead of night, Ged and his son took an impression from it in moist clay. The cloy mould was then placed in an oven and baked, after which molten type-metal was poured into it. Thus was the very first stereotype plate made — and it was a great success. From Ged's stereotype plates were printed two prayer books for the University of Cambridge, and an edition of *Sallust*. But either through sheer lack of enterprise, or because they feared their compositors, the Edinburgh printers would not take up the invention.

William Ged sought assistance beyond the boundaries of Scotland. He entered into partnership with Jenner, a London stationer, and Thomas James, a typesetter, a partnership which proved, unfortunately, to be a failure. William Ged was left to struggle on alone. The Dutch printers were more enterprising. They repeatedly approached Ged with tempting offers to take his patent to Holland, which he steadfastly refused on patriotic grounds. One must admire his spirit of patriotism, but one questions his wisdom in retarding progress and impoverishing himself out of a mistaken loyalty to the very people who refused him assistance. For 20 weary years William Ged plodded on trying to induce British printers to take up stereotyping until, broken-hearted by lack of success through the jealousy of the trade and the unabated opposition of the compositors, he died in Poverty on October 1749, at the comparatively early age of 59.

His son James tried very hard to develop his father's invention, but with no greater success. Defeated and frustrated at every point, he finally gave up the struggle in despair. Emigrating to Jamaica, he died there, friendless and stereotyping was, of course, afterwards improved, papier maché taking the place of clay for the matrices.

### **107.4.3 The organisation of a newspaper, 1973**

*Hamersley News*, Perth, 25 October 1973, p.9: This edition marks the first anniversary of the publication of the *Hamersley News* in newspaper format, which seems an opportune moment to feature the techniques used in the publication of our community paper. An important aspect of the newspaper is the news gathering. The main editorial office is located at Dampier and has a staff of two, editor Gerald Howard and publications assistant Mrs Helen Oud. At Tom Price and Paraburdoo, correspondents are employed in addition to a local company correspondent.

At Tom Price, Mrs Rosemary Stafford gathers all the sporting, social and community news whilst personnel assistant Pat Bonnar keeps an eye on company news. Regular trips to the various sites are carried out by the editor to keep in contact with both correspondents and developments. Being a fortnightly paper, the two working weeks for each paper are divided into reporting week and production week.

Reporting week is the period when news sources are investigated, articles prepared, photographs taken and artwork prepared. Production week is a week of intense activity, involving rewrites of articles, last minute write-ups and the preparation of layout sheets which detail where each article and photo are to be located in the paper. Photograph sizes are also detailed. As layout sheets are completed for each page, articles, photographs, photo captions and instructions are put into separate envelopes, bundled together and sent to Perth for processing. Completed pages of the paper are sent over a period of two to three days.

Since its production in newspaper form, the *Hamersley News* has been typeset in a small group of offices in Capitol House (Perth), next to the Bank of New South Wales head office in William Street, by Fastype Computer Compositors Pty. Ltd. Until March of this year the paper was being set on computerised IBM Composers, but in April Fastype changed to photosetting, becoming the first typesetting bureau in W.A. to use highspeed computerised phototypesetting equipment.

The Singer Friden photo-typesetter used by Fastype is fed with punched tape generated on electronic keyboards where copy typed is displayed on a screen similar to a TV screen. The keyboards hold three lines in memory, punching the earliest line on tape when typing of a fourth line commences. While held in memory, any mistakes noticed can be corrected. Operators have none of the problems of loading paper, ribbon jams or using a rubber or correcting fluid which typists experience. Programmes determining line length, type size and style are devised and stored in the photosetter's memory. These are accessed by the keyboard operator by codes interspersed with the editorial copy.

Four film strips, each containing a font (or set) of characters and figures in a given type style, occupy a quadrant of a drum on the photosetter. The drum revolves at 1800 rpm, and any character from any of the four fonts can be 'arrested' by a flash from a zenon lamp of one-millionth of a second's duration. A revolving turret of lenses in the photosetter determines, from codes on the tape or in a stored programme, the size, style and width of the type to be set and the image is conveyed directly beneath photo-sensitive paper through a flexible fibre-optic system, which travels from left to right as each line is set.

Lines of the length and type size of those in this feature are typeset at a speed of 40 lines per minute. When a tape has been "played", the exposed photosensitive paper is processed in an instant processor, and the typeset copy is ready to be made up in page form after 10 minutes' drying.

The accuracy of the copy keyboarded can be checked on Fastype's Editing Terminal. This machine reads tapes at a speed of 200 characters a second (480 of these lines per minute, for the statistically-minded) displaying up to 2,600 at a time on a TV-type screen and holding a further similar volume in computer memory.

Alterations, additions, deletions, etc., can be made from a 'command' keyboard on the terminal while the copy is held in computer memory, and when the operator is satisfied with the accuracy of the displayed copy, depression of a key will cause the corrected copy to be punched on tape at 75 characters per second, ready for the photosetter. Fastype's Editing Terminal is the first of its kind in W.A. and is the most sophisticated piece of typesetting equipment in the State, boasts Fastype's manager, Richard Eddy. Apart from checking the accuracy of copy, the terminal is used to generate complex programmes to load into the photosetter's memory when handling work entailing complicated formatting.

Once set, copy is made up into pages of the paper, complete with screened photographs, ready to hand to the Independent's Commercial Printing Division manager, Nobby McManus, for plating and printing. After the pages have been supplied to the Independent by Fastype, they are photographed and the resulting negatives are imposed in fours and burnt down on to an aluminium plate. For a 16-page issue four plates are required. These are bent and locked into place on the machine. Utilising the principle that oil and water do not mix, the plates are dampened. The exposed area of the plate or printing surface repels water, but, the oil-based ink will adhere to it and the unexposed area or "white area" accepts water and repels ink. The resulting image is transferred to a large impression roller and is then "offset" on to the paper which is feeding through the units. As the paper runs through the machine it is collected and folded and comes out ready to be wrapped and freighted north.

#### **107.4.4 Border closure and opening**

*Mail*, Adelaide, Saturday, 18 October 1952, p.14: Staff housing difficulties have caused the *Pinnaroo and Border Times* to close down after serving the district for 40 years. Publisher of the *Glenelg Guardian* (Mr. A. G. Smedley) said today he would publish a new weekly newspaper in its place, to be known as the *Border Guardian*. The paper, which would be printed in Adelaide, would circulate from Lameroo to Cowangie (Vic). First edition would be published on Thursday (23/10).



## 5—RECENTLY PUBLISHED

### 107.5.1 Books

**Jacobsen, Kris**, *A Land of Promise: An Account of Jacob Isaacs, Jewish Convict, and Benjamin Isaacs, Christian Printer and Publish*, self-published, Canberra, 2020 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition).

First published in 2009, after the author researched the lives of Jacob Isaacs and his son, Benjamin. It was during a wider exploration of the lives of Benjamin's children that an additional facet to Benjamin's printing career came to light. This led to this revised and reformatted edition which includes a reference to an additional newspaper printed and published by Benjamin in Victoria with son-in-law Robert Wilson.

### 107.5.2 Articles

**Greste, Peter**, "Virus underscores crucial role of media in a crisis", *Age*, 30 March 2020, p.27. Discusses the importance of reliable, independent information sources in a crisis such as the bushfire and COVID-19 crises.

**Koziol, Michael**, "The fallen media tycoon who came in from the cold", *Sun-Herald*, 22 March 2020, pp.26-27. Conrad Black is out from the shadows since being pardoned by his friend, Donald Trump. Black is a former major shareholder in Australia's Fairfax newspaper group.

**Leggatt, Johanna**, "News deserts: A worrying portent for our democracy", *Australian Book Review*, April 2020. About the closure of AAP.

**McCarthy, Joanne**, "One day shaped the rest of my life", *Canberra Times*, 23 February 2020, p.13. The journalist whose articles in the *Newcastle Herald* about child sexual abuse in the Catholic church led to a royal commission tells about how she became a journalist.

**McCarthy, Joanne**, "It's goodbye from me", *Newcastle Herald*, 4 April 2020, p.3. The author's farewell to journalism. See ANHG 107.1.14 above.

**Manning, Paddy**, "Wire less", *Saturday Paper*, 14-20 March 2020, p.9. Examines the reasons behind the impending closure of AAP.

**Merritt, Chris**, "Federal police plan tramples on press freedom", *Australian*, 13 March 2020, p.23.

**Myrtle, John**, "Rethinking Australian journalism in the 1960s: The 1966-67 work value case and the Sydney newspaper strike", *Honest History*, 7 April 2020.

See: <http://honesthistory.net.au/wp/myrtle-john-rethinking-australian-journalism-in-the-1960s-the-1966-67-work-value-case-and-the-sydney-newspaper-strike/>

**Miller, Michael**, "Heavy hearts as the printing presses stop running", *Australian*, 2 April 2020, p.10. Governments have ignored media reforms for years, argues the author; now we're paying (Miller is the executive chairman of News Corp Australasia).

**Tiffen, Rodney**, "The age of the news agency needn't be over", *Inside Story*, 19 March 2020. Vital reasons for the rise of Reuters, Australian Associated Press and other agencies haven't gone away.

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