Challenging racism and representing diversity: Towards a best practice journalism

Chair: Usha M. Rodrigues, Deakin University

Research shows that the Australian mainstream media has a long history of racist reporting and social commentary (Australia Press Council 2008; Phillips 2011). With a media industry that is overwhelmingly white, reportage on diverse communities and issues frequently exhibit the familiar tropes of dehumanizing and typecasting discourse (Tindale and Klocker 2017). This panel brings together leading journalism experts and practitioners to discuss the issue of a lack of fair representation of culturally diverse communities and their news in the Australian mainstream media, and best practice to address it. Importantly, it combines academic and non-academic inquiries into racialised reporting and asks: How can journalists and media workers maintain their journalistic integrity whilst reporting on minority communities in a fair and humanizing way?

Keywords: racism, racialised reporting, Islamophobia, diversity, multiculturalism, representation, news audiences, opinion journalism

Papers:

Dr Usha M Rodrigues (Chair), Deakin University.
Holding a mirror to the Australian television news media

With *Black Lives Matters* coverage, the lack of representation of cultural diversity in Australian television news and current affairs was highlighted by many (Yussuf 2020). Television news and current affairs, as a visible forum where Australian see themselves and their stories, continue to remain one of the main sources of news for Australians (Digital News Report: Australia 2019). And, yet journalists who tell news and current affairs stories all seem to be from the same background (Wallbank 2017). According to the 2016 Census, Australia as a multicultural nation had nearly half of its population either born overseas or having a parent born overseas. News and current affairs stories about various minority communities are either not reported or reported inadequately in mainstream online media (Rodrigues, Niemann and Paradies 2019). This paper presents the results of a mapping of cultural backgrounds of presenters, commentators and reporters, who present television news and current affairs in Australia. It also outlines an examination of news and current affairs stories about minority communities, to ascertain the quality of this coverage in terms of fairness in representation of the views of minority communities on Australian television.

Dr Chrisanthi Giotis, Centre for Media Transition, UTS.
A tool for audiences to train journalists in power dynamics

In this presentation Chrisanthi will discuss the Frame Reflection Interview (FRI), a tool for developing trust and understanding between journalists and the people they report on, and re-empowering communities to shape the stories told about them. Australian audiences with some of the best lived understanding of important global stories are also some of the most disenfranchised members of our polity. Multicultural communities have a long history

of being misrepresented and not considered a key audience demographic, creating marginalisation within the public sphere. The FRI takes a technique developed for intractable policy controversies and applies it to news practice. Community members are prompted with specific examples of mainstream media and asked what aspects are not adequately reported, or misreported. This shifts power dynamics and draws on 'listening' research aimed at best realising journalism's role in democratic societies (O'donnell, Lloyd & Dreher 2009). It also addresses recent industry/community concern of elitism in journalism (McGill 2016; Ruddick 2017).

Professor Karen Farquharson, Professor of Sociology and Head of the School of Social & Political Sciences at the University of Melbourne.
Racism, complaint, sport and media

Abstract: Using sport as an example and engaging with critical race theory, this paper analyses the reporting of complaints of racism in the media. In particular, it looks at what happens when a Black athlete complains of racism, how the complaint and its responses are reported, and the consequences of such reporting. Drawing on examples from Australia, the paper argues that complaining about racism never has positive outcomes for those making the complaint and often serves to reinforce existing power structures and social hierarchies. It considers what journalists and news organisations might do differently to better report on and support victims of racism in sport.

Deliana Iacoban and Umesha Weerakkoddy, All Together Now.
Social commentary, audiences and conversation on race in Australia

In November 2019, ATN released the report, *Social Commentary and Racism in 2019*, a collaboration with UTS and supported by the Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia. The study analysed 281 race-related opinion pieces and found that 57% negatively portrayed racial minorities, doing so in both overt and covert ways. In 2020, ATN analysed an additional 315 opinion pieces. This presentation will discuss the results of these analyses and explore the manifestation of white cultural dominance in Australian mainstream social commentary. In addition, the presentation will also include a discussion on how readers interact with racialised opinion pieces. In 2020, ATN conducted an inquiry into the relationship between racialised opinion pieces and comments made by readers directly on the online news platforms in response to these articles. This investigation explores how audiences interact with racist commentary and whether the comment sections are an echo-chamber where racist ideas are reinforced by readers. We know anecdotally that socio-political commentators in Australian media are highly popular, thus having the potential to engage large audiences. However, the nature of the audiences' engagement with racialised content is difficult to quantify and analyse, creating a gap in this area of research.

Local news in Australia: Trends, policy debates and the future

Chair: Kristy Hess, Deakin University

Since March more than 200 local newspapers have either closed down, stopped their printing presses temporarily or moved to digital only publications. It has prompted media commentaries and industry-based research into the state of local news in Australia, amid concerns of increasing news gaps and a decline in quality/reliable information for rural and regional communities. This panel brings together researchers and think tanks in Australia who offer different perspectives to documenting the current state of regional journalism and identifying policies and strategies for the sector. Panellists will highlight current trends in the sector, chart the decline of local news and discuss an innovations agenda for the future. Approaches include national surveys of journalists and audiences, mapping the hot spots of news decline and fine-grained ethnographic research on how communities respond when a newspaper closes. The panel will be hosted by chief investigators of Australia's largest study into the future of small local newspapers funded by the Australian Research Council and is designed to bring together ideas and emphasise the need for strategies and solutions to secure news sustainability in rural and regional areas.

Papers:

Local journalism and coronavirus: connections, comparisons and cures?
Kristy Hess, Deakin University

There is no doubt the COVID-19 crisis has widened existing, deep cracks in the news media industry. This paper addresses the issue through an exploration of possible approaches for improving the health of local newspapers during and beyond the pandemic. We adopt an analogical framework to argue some of COVID-19-related strategies and tactics used by governments, business and health authorities to fight the global health pandemic present valuable lessons for the preservation of local journalism. We suggest five coronavirus-related themes resonate with a much- needed innovations agenda for the local media sector in Australia: 1: support for essential services, 2: warnings of complacency against an evolving threat, 3: appreciating the power of the social 4: coordinated government/policy responses and 4: 'we are all in this together'.

Keywords: Local journalism, regional and rural newspapers, media innovation, COVID-19, public interest journalism, community, Facebook, social order and connection.

Scott Downman and Richard Murray, University of Queensland
Deserts and Green Shoots – Emerging models of local and hyperlocal news in South East Queensland

2020 has been a tough year for local news providers in Southeast Queensland. With communities reeling from the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, News Corp executives announced they would be either closing newspapers or moving them to

digital platforms. Twenty-two regional and community publications moved to digital only publications, and 15 community newspapers closed for good. Amid this devastation, new local and hyperlocal news organisations have already begun to emerge. Some of these organisations, who have been struggling alongside established mastheads, have since received an unexpected boost as local businesses have started to favour them as advertisers. Local entrepreneurs have also emerged, experimenting with new publications in some of the affected regions. For example, in the Gympie region, two new publications have been launched since the print edition of the 153-year-old Gympie Times stopped. This presentation investigates these changes across rural and urban Southeast Queensland. Along the way, we seek to understand these new organisations in terms of their business models, how they understand their role in their communities, and how they conceive the future of their respective news services. The presentation will explore whether the recent closures are actually sparking a local journalism renaissance in Queensland.

Keywords: Hyperlocal journalism, digital disruption, community, entrepreneur

Sora Park and Caroline Fisher, University of Canberra
What is local news?: Journalists' and audiences' perception in regional Australia

Reliable local news in times of emergency and crisis is essential. However, during the 2020 bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic many regional Australians experienced a decline in their local news offering. We present two empirical studies that will shed light on the current state of regional news from the lens of both regional news audiences and journalists. The first study is a survey of 2,038 regional news consumers in 47 non-metro local government areas focusing on the news gaps and willingness to support local news. The second study is a survey of 307 regional journalists and interviews with 30 reporters in regional Australia across print, TV, radio and online. The central aim of the study was to find out what regional journalists themselves need to keep serving their communities. We focus on the community connection and advocacy function of local news and how closures and suspensions are affecting the journalists and news audiences.

Keywords: local news, regional, journalists, news consumption, news gap

Kathryn Bowd, University of Adelaide
Reviving connections?: Recentering the 'local' in news publishing

Historically, one of the greatest assets of local newspapers was their connections with their readership communities. This was particularly evident in the early years of regional Australian newspapers, with publications often fiercely partisan in promoting local interests, but could also be seen in an ongoing sense of community 'ownership' and emphasis on localised news coverage. However, as most newspapers became part of large corporations, copy-sharing, multi-platform publishing and newsroom downsizing reduced their capacity to connect with their readership communities. The impact of COVID-19 has exacerbated this, with newsroom closures and shifts to online-only publication. However, alongside this, rapid growth of new independent media outlets can be seen as representing

a reversion to a strongly localised approach to news. In many cases, the new publishers are journalists formerly employed by established newspapers, and are community members with a strong interest in their region. Their localised news emphasis may provide opportunities to revive community connection - with early exploration of the language used in promoting these publications and the perspectives of journalist/owners suggesting this is central to their mission - and to embed these publications in local communication.

Keywords: local journalism, community, connection, community 'ownership'.

Julie Freeman, Deakin University
Trust in local news: perspectives from a rural community

While trust in news fluctuates depending on the contexts and means of news consumption, it holds an important role in audience interpretations of information. Regional consumers have been found to have higher levels of trust in local news than national or general sources. This paper explores why this is the case through qualitative insights drawn from interviews and focus groups held with community members and local media personnel in East Gippsland, Victoria. It highlights that trust in local news directly relates to reporters' and audiences' sense of place. The close proximity between providers and consumers means that local journalists must ensure accurate and impartial reporting or risk rapid community backlash when mistakes or bias are apparent. Community participants indicated they have greater trust in local newspapers than other sources. In particular, online news, which is used to supplement print and broadcast headlines rather than as an exclusive means of news consumption, is often considered biased or lacking in local relevance. Its perceived trustworthiness depends upon source credibility, with participants viewing information from socially situated local organisations as more authoritative than that obtained from general media providers. This paper suggests that to maintain rural communities' trust in news, local media require further support to continue to perform their vital function of interpreting public interest matters for audiences.

Keywords: local news; rural/regional communities; trust; sense of place

Marco Magasic, Deakin University

This presentation will unveil findings of a two-month long focused ethnographic study examining how people living in the rural Australian town of Lightning Ridge have adapted to the closure of their local newspaper, The Ridge News, which shut down in 2015. While the scope of the study focuses on changes to civic participation and democratic engagement, the findings presented here gives equal weighting to the role of the news and information in shaping the social sphere - the counterpart of the 'public sphere', as a conceptual framework to examine the way people communicate with each other, participate in town life, and maintain their connection and place within the community. The social focus of this research is unique in studies that look at news gaps, which have primarily focused on voter turnout and engagement with the political process. How news gaps have impacted Australian communities is also an untapped vein of research. The

findings are grounded in the researcher's experience of moving to and living in Lightning Ridge and interviews conducted with people encountered through active participation in town life. Residents in Lightning Ridge have less active social lives and lower civic engagement because information channels like Facebook and word of mouth have failed to adequately replicate the functions of The Ridge News. This has led to people missing out on important social events like funerals and other public functions and left with people without an advocate in their struggle against government.

Keywords: local news, social sphere, news gap, focused ethnography, civic engagement

Anna Draffin, Chief Executive Officer Public Journalism Initiative
Changes in the news industry

Australian regional news media businesses are under considerable strain. Together, the newspaper, free-to-air and radio and other writers' employed in Australia in the November 2019 quarter. Those numbers continue to fall, but they ought to be growing. By providing 'information and commentary on contemporary affairs', news media bring together communities and foster democracy. Just when they're sorely needed, the Australian news media are at risk. PIJI is tracking changes to news production, and availability through its Australian Newsroom Mapping Project. Across the country, the crisis has worsened dramatically due to the economic shock of COVID-19. According to the map data at the time of writing, at least 21 titles have permanently closed just between April and June 2020, most of them in Queensland. A further six were lost through being merged into other properties. Industry contractions, closures and job losses will seriously affect the depth and breadth of public interest journalism in Australia, particularly in suburban, regional and rural areas. The emerging deficits in the quantity and quality of available local news and information threaten community cohesion and economic recovery during these uncertain times and undermine Australia's democratic systems. Many Australian communities face the real possibility that the essential service of local news will no longer be there for them. This presentation will track the changes of the Australian news industry over the past 12-24 months, with a particular focus on the COVID-19 impact highlighting areas of acute need such as emerging news deserts as well as emerging trends, for example, community-led news provision.

Panel title: Non-profit journalism in Australia: growing a movement

Megan Williams (Croakey Health Media, University of Sydney)
Misha Ketchell (The Conversation)
Damian Thompson (The Conversation)
Dr Melissa Sweet (Croakey Health Media)

Key words: non-profit journalism, Indigenous knowledge, innovation, social journalism, communities

Associate Professor Megan Williams (Croakey Health Media); the Research Lead and Assistant Director of the National Centre for Cultural Competence at The University of Sydney
Australia currently lacks strategic leadership and collaborative efforts to support, develop and promote non-profit journalism. We hope to develop a national collaboration to drive a vision, strategic direction and actions to promote and sustain non-profit journalism (NPJ) in Australia. Who needs to be part of this movement? What can non-profit journalism learn from other sectors, including the history and development of the Aboriginal community controlled health sector? How might non-profit models help to transform public interest journalism and its relationship with communities?

Misha Ketchell, Editor and Executive Director, The Conversation
What are some of the similarities and differences between for-profit and non-profit models of public interest journalism? Drawing upon my experience with The Conversation, I share five key insights from what I've learnt about success in non-profit journalism, and consider some of the implications for journalism research, education and practice.

Damian Thompson (The Conversation), Director of Foundations and Fundraising
An overview of The Conversation's growth in the United States and other places. How does this story reflect broader trends in non-profit journalism, philanthropic efforts and the international context? Are there lessons for non-profit journalism in Australia?

Dr Melissa Sweet, Managing Editor, Croakey Health Media
At a time of disruption and transformation, within the journalism and media sector and more broadly, what is the role of non-profit models of public interest journalism? What might help to develop the sector and enable innovation? And what are some of the barriers?

Fact Check and Journalism: Industry and Research Directions

The Fact Check Panel will address the critical need to understand and advance the current role of fact-checking as an essential component of independent journalism in a democratic society. Researchers and practitioners will report on emerging academic and industry directions in, and studies of, fact checking practice and media and information environments and their challenges.

Presenters are members of a newly forming group, the Fact Check Lab @ RMIT, which brings together a network of researchers, fact check practitioners, policy makers and others interested in research that helps develop the theories and practices of fact-checking around the world.

The Lab is focused on the organizational and practical shape of fact-checking in Australia and beyond and seeks to locate this journalistic undertaking in the context of the financial,

institutional, social, technological and political networks on which it relies and to which it responds. The Panel presentations will provide information on particular industry and research initiatives, as well as demonstrate the scope of this ongoing research agenda.

Panel participants and presentations

The Convergence of Political Fact-Checking and Debunking Misinformation
Sushi Das & Russell Skelton, RMIT University/RMIT ABC Fact Check.

We will examine the extent to which political fact-checking and debunking misinformation appear to be converging. Until recently these were two separate operations, with political fact-checking focused on checking claims made by public figures engaged in public debate, and debunking focused on the verification of misinformation and disinformation spread mainly through social media. The positions of different fact-checking organizations (eg, Pagella Politica (Italy), Politicifact (USA), AFP (France) are considered alongside RMIT ABC Fact Check.

Fact Check is Australia's premier fact-checking organization whose core activity since inception in 2017 has been political fact-checking. However, the unit appreciates the importance of debunking misinformation, especially in the light of the accelerated spread of misinformation since the outbreak of COVID-19. In 2018 Fact Check created a Fact Check micro credential to address information literacy and raise critical thinking skills. It now also produces a newsletter, CoronaCheck, that provides aggregated debunked news. Given the tightening of resources as a result of the pandemic, Fact Check continues to seek new avenues by which it can address political fact-checking as well as debunking.

Keywords: political fact-checking, debunking, fact-checking organizations, COVID-19, public debate, social media, misinformation, disinformation, fake news, verification.

Not So Fast: the temporality of political fact-checking practice
Gordon Farrer, RMIT University.

As the news cycle speeds up, political fact checkers insist on slowing down. In a world in which news delivered as quickly as possible is not only crucial to the click-based attention-seeking economy business model but is considered "better" – according to a paradigm that posits that the more timely, the more relevant, the more useful news is – fact checkers have replaced the "timeliness" news value with a "only-when-it-is-ready-because-it-is-correct" value.

This is one of several significant departures from normative news journalism that can be identified in fact checking practice. The ramifications on journalism output and impact of this subfield of the "slow journalism" movement are manifold:

• it produces a deeper, broader and more contextual understanding of the issue under investigation

• it insists on a radical transparency approach to journalism practice that aims 1) to instill trust in the process – and therefore the fact-checker's verdict, leading to the possibility of deepening trust in journalism more broadly – and 2) to curb the behaviour of public figures who eschew accepted conventions around fact-based public discourse and policy development
• by identifying pertinent issues of concern, and slowing down the discourse, it helps to reframe an agenda of important issues and extend their shelf life in the debate beyond the hyper-charged daily news cycle
• it creates a set of verified facts to which political journalists and the public can refer and from which, therefore, informed public discourse can confidently proceed.

Keywords: political fact-checking, fact-checking practice, temporality, slow journalism, news cycle

Fact-Checking as a 'community of practice': the networked nature of CoronaCheck Stephanie Brookes, Monash University & Lisa Waller, RMIT University.

This paper considers the way in which institutional alliances and professional organisations form the basis of a networked approach to the production and distribution of fact-checks. Drawing on insights from theorisations that conceive of journalism as a 'community of practice' and emphasise its networked nature, it will be argued that understanding the international networks underpinning fact-checking efforts is key to shedding light on the role, value, and impact of this innovative element of journalistic practice. The networked nature of fact checking is explored here through a case study of CoronaCheck, the COVID-19 fact-checking effort of Australia's RMIT-ABC Fact Check. Launched as a newsletter and series of posts on the RMIT-ABC Fact Check website on 27 March 2020, CoronaCheck was signalled as a collaborative effort from its inception. We present a content analysis of the focus and sources of CoronaCheck to interrogate the shifting mobilisation of, and reliance on, international institutional networks. Research interviews with fact-checkers both from RMIT-ABC FactCheck and its international partners further inform understanding of the institutional collaboration and resource-sharing underpinning CoronaCheck.

Keywords: Fact-checking, Coronacheck, community of practice, fact-checking networks, COVID19 and misinformation.

Fact checking's place in HASS teaching Cathy Greenfield & Lucy Morieson, RMIT

This paper considers how fact-checking fits into HASS curricula. It argues that alongside learning verification techniques and media literacy skills, HASS graduates need a range of attributes and knowledges to navigate and deal with the complexity, ambiguity, and both inadvertent and intentional confusion that marks current media environments. Teaching agendas gathered under the titles of 'fake news' and 'post truth' and finding remedies in

fact-checking and digital media literacy deserve our attention but also raise questions of description and analysis.

How do we approach the technologies and the political formations which regularly take headline place in the challenges of fake news, a post-truth era, and the problem of "social"? What scope is there for developing agendas of ethical formation, the terrain of public knowledge, and democratic decision making? While situating practices of fact checking within their professional histories we put forward an argument for public knowledge as a framework for considering media literacy in an era of heightened epistemic difference.

Keywords: public knowledge, capabilities, communicative abundance, HASS curriculum, communication studies, fact checking.

Addressing misinformation and news quality on digital platforms via an industry code of practice
Michael Davis, Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA)

In December 2019, the Australian Government asked the major digital platforms to develop a voluntary code of practice to address misinformation and news quality on their services, and tasked the Australian Communications and Media Authority with overseeing development of the code. The ACMA outlined its expectations for the code in a position paper released in June 2020. These expectations were informed by the increase in misinformation seen during the Australian bushfire season and the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted the potential for acute as well as chronic harm to Australians and Australian society.
Addressing this complex and dynamic problem requires collective and coordinated action by industry, civil society and governments.

Keywords: misinformation, code of practice, digital platforms, ACMA.

Why Study Journalism Now?

Alex Wake, RMIT University
Matthew Ricketson, Deakin University
Jaqui Park, Centre for Media Transition, UTS
Craig Batty, UTS

News organisations are closing, the costs of university fees are rising, trust in journalism has been waning, and people seem more interested in what's on Netflix than what's happening in Canberra. What does it mean for the future of journalism education and research in Australia? Professor Matthew Ricketson takes on the role of journalist asking hard questions – to ask why are we still turning up to work. Joining him is Professor Craig Batty (pre-recorded video) who will talk about the impact of the Jobs Ready Package, JERAA president

Alex Wake and UTS's Centre for Media Transition's Jacqui Park. Can Matthew mount a case for us all to pack our bags, or will Alex and Jacqui, find some some sunshine and greenshoots to share?

Media Freedom and Politics

Panel chair: Associate Professor Johan Lidberg, Monash University

Speakers:
Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC, MP (Member for Isaacs, Victoria. ALP)
Senator Sarah Hanson-Young (Senator for South Australia. Australian Greens)

The consecutive raids on journalists and media organisations in June 2019 by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) rocked the media industry in Australia and reverberated beyond our borders. International media outlets such as the New York Times, the Washington Post, Deutche Welle and the Financial Times shook their collective heads in disbelief.

It has never been claimed that the stories the three senior Australian journalists produced were factually wrong. The stories on national security matters were considered to be in the highest public interest dealing with alleged war crimes by Australian special forces in Afghanistan and proposed extended powers for Australia's intelligence agencies.

In spite of this, the AFP saw fit to raid the home of one of the journalists and the ABC headquarters in Sydney. The reporters then had to wait (in one case) for more than a year to know if they would be charged or not.

Legally pursuing journalists for doing their job, hunting down confidential journalistic sources, more than 80 national and anti-terror laws amended or passed since, September 11, 2001, conducting trials involving national security in closed courts, poorly functioning Access to Information systems, all this led to Australia falling six places, to place 26 in the 2020 Press Freedom Index (RSF, 2020).

At the 2019 JERAA conference a panel with some of the affected journalists was held. 18 months later, the fallout from the AFP raids continues and it is now overdue to ask our responsible politicians: why does Australia stand out as one of the most draconian media freedom and civil liberties environments in the liberal democratic world and what do they intend to do about this?

The Junction: The Year We've Had, The Year Ahead

Editor Andrew Dodd
Chief of Staff Michelle Lollo
Site Coordinator Kayt Davies

Deputy Editor Jeanti St Clair
Board Member Peter English

What a year it has been for the student collaborative journalism team at The Junction. What are the lessons that have been learned? And what can we do in the coming year? Hear from Editor in Chief Andrew Dodd, site editor Kayt Davies, CoJo project chief of staff Michelle Lollo, and the rest of The Junction team. This is the panel to attend if you want to be at the forefront of student collaborative publishing.

Where are the women in the news? Addressing the news sourcing gender imbalance.

Chair: Associate Professor Fiona Martin, University of Sydney

Panellists:
Dr Kathryn Shine, Curtin University
Jenna Price, University of Technology Sydney
Rebecca Jones, Bloomberg (Melbourne)

News content from countries around the world is dominated by male sources. Australian news is no exception. The 2019 Women for Media Report found that men accounted for 66 per cent of all direct sources, compared to 34 per cent of women. In sports content, the proportion of males increased to 95 per cent, and for business and finance men comprised 82 per cent of sources. Globally, women make up only about 24 per cent of people heard, read about or seen in the news (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2015). Among sources deemed to be 'expert commentators', women make up 19 per cent. Journalists have argued that this gender imbalance situation exists because women are generally more reluctant than males to be interviewed, but recent research suggests women are just as willing as men to make a contribution to news content.

Despite increasing research attention and awareness of gender inequity in news content, little progress has been made to date. Women are being excluded from the news. Their experiences and perspectives are not being adequately heard or recognised. And they are losing out on the influence and authority that is associated with appearing in the news media.

This panel will discuss the gendered nature of news and the implications of the prevalent gender imbalance. It will consider initiatives by news organisations such as the BBC, ABC and Bloomberg to increase female participation in the news and ask: Are such initiatives working? What is needed to make substantial and ongoing changes to news sourcing practices? Are journalists trying to address the inequity or are they lazy and complacent, as some researchers have suggested? And what can we as journalism educators do to raise awareness of this issue and lead efforts to increase female participation in the news?