INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM, THE PUBLIC SPHERE AND DEMOCRACY

The Watchdog Role of Australian Broadsheets in the Digital Age

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Produced on archival quality paper
To Andrew, Alex, Lilly and Emma with love.
ABSTRACT

This thesis uses mixed methodologies to examine Australian broadsheet newspapers' role in contributing investigative journalism to the public sphere over seven decades from 1956 to 2011. It explores print newspapers' content to make findings about the quantity and qualitative features of investigative journalism over time.

This thesis considers established theories of the media, democracy and the public sphere and finds that, in Australia, as in other developed democracies, investigative journalism has played a normative role informing the public sphere and promoting democracy by providing transparency and holding public figures to account. While investigative journalism is not exclusively the domain of broadsheet newspapers, the thesis finds they have contributed a significant sum of public interest investigative journalism to the Australian public sphere.

However, print newspapers, especially broadsheets, have suffered circulation and revenue declines since the late 1980s. Print journalism has relied on advertising revenues to pay for it. In the digital age, the symbiotic relationship between journalism and advertising — at the core of the newspaper business model — has fractured. Media companies no longer have a monopoly on attracting advertisers, nor do they have a monopoly on reporting news.

This thesis represents original and new research in Australia. It is the first study combining qualitative and quantitative methods to determine if the Australian public sphere has lost investigative reporting as newspapers experience economic decline.

Empirical data were gathered through three content analyses, including: selected mastheads over five decades; selected online news sites; and newspaper stories from selected categories of journalism's peer-reviewed Walkley awards since their inception in 1956. This study also included qualitative analysis through 22 semi-structured interviews with editors, media proprietors, investigative journalists, media analysts, academics and media sector unionists. It directly compared the contributions of print investigative journalism between broadsheets and
tabloids; and more broadly examined the contributions from non-print media. The content analysis data of news websites tested whether the nascent online sphere was originating, rather than merely distributing, Australian investigative journalism.

This research resulted in the acquisition of a comprehensive repository of Australian award-winning and investigative journalism from 1956 to 2011 — the first of its kind. To perform the analyses, this author derived an original operational definition of investigative journalism informed by both academic literature and media professionals.

Finally, this thesis concludes what effects economic and technological changes have had on broadsheet investigative journalism, and discusses emerging trends in investigative reporting. The research contributes original findings to the scholarly literature about the state of the relationship between print investigative journalism and democratic accountability in Australia.
DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

The thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD.
Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.
The thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, reference list and appendices.

ANDREA LOUISE CARSON
PREFACE

Sections of this thesis have been previously published in the following sources but appear in this dissertation in a revised format:

**Book Chapter**

**Conference Papers (Refereed)**

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Carson, A. 'Climate Sceptics Steal the Big Tobacco Playbook: Create Doubt, Cause Delay,' *The Drum*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 15 June 2011.


Carson, A. 'Death by 1900 Cuts: Will Quality Journalism Thrive under Fairfax's New Model?' *The Conversation*, 18 June 2012.


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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background to the Study

In Australia, as in many developed Western democracies such as the United States of America and Britain, newspaper revenues and circulations are in decline.1 Interestingly, the reverse is true in some less developed nations as literacy rates improve.2 But, in Australia and the West, the decline in recent decades has been attributed to technological, cultural, economic and political changes.3

Technological development is the most commonly cited reason for the decline in hardcopy circulations because it has engendered other media, such as radio, television and most recently the Internet, which all compete for advertising revenues and audience share.

The rise in new media technologies is also strongly correlated to falls in newspaper advertising, which has been the major income source for mastheads.4 The tight bond between the business of selling advertising, and providing news, has broken.5 Newspapers were a monopolist force that sold display and classified advertising, and used journalism as the lure to attract what advertisers call 'eyeballs' or consumers. Today, non-media companies can attract online advertising without linking it to journalism.6 Also, consumers are no longer required to buy a particular hardcopy newspaper to canvass classifieds. Some newspapers place their advertising indexes online for no charge, but they are competing with nascent non-

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6 Ibid.
media companies providing classified indexes online, both searchable and free, particularly in the automobile and housing markets. The business model for traditional media organisations has suffered, and newspapers that relied heavily on classified advertising revenues have been hardest hit. The Internet has not only increased competition for classified advertising — taking a significant and growing share of the classified advertising market that was traditionally the domain of newspapers (particularly broadsheets) — it has also driven down the price of classified and display advertising universally.7

Newspapers also receive income from hardcopy sales, but in most cases the cover price barely meets distribution costs.8 Since the late 1980s, newspaper circulations have significantly declined — the steepest fall in newspaper sales in Australia over a single decade was between 1990 and 2000,9 notably, for half of that period, the commercial side of the Internet had not yet arrived, suggesting other factors have contributed to the fall in circulation.

As noted, media compete for advertising revenue, and this has included free metropolitan newspapers. These papers became prevalent in Australia from 2000, competing with the paid daily newspaper market, and further increasing competition for advertising, and contributing to a lowering of print advertising's unit price. Media academics such as Britain's Bob Franklin suggest the 'free newspaper' factor should not be underestimated as an influential force in the decline of paid print newspapers — at least as significant as the Internet — because it 'cannibalised' content, and poached circulation and advertising revenue from traditional paid mastheads, sometimes within a newspaper group.10

Beyond the competition from technology that has seen the arrival of newer forms of media, cultural factors such as readers' faster-paced lifestyles have eschewed the leisurely newspaper read, and further contributed to newspaper circulation falls.11 Former Guardian editor Peter

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8 Samuel, G. 'Communications and Media Law Association,' Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, 4 May 2010.
10 Franklin, B. 'The Future of Newspapers,' p. 634.
11 Ibid.
Preston blamed work and lifestyle changes (as well as broadcast news) for the death of evening papers in Britain. The United States and Australia have also witnessed these changes. Home deliveries of evening papers became difficult with nightly traffic snarls, while urban sprawl irrevocably changed commuter culture. In city fringes, cars replaced trains, along with the habit of an evening newspaper read on the way home from work.\textsuperscript{12} Television nightly news programs also overtook the evening newspaper as a preferred source of keeping up-to-date with the latest developments. In 2013, free-to-air television is experiencing lower ratings than in the past for its news programs as the Internet and mobile technologies challenge it for news audience share. Newspapers have identified the opportunities and threats of online news, and have developed online sites in attempts to 'colonise' the online news audience.\textsuperscript{13} In 1995, \textit{The Age} was the first of the major Australian dailies to develop a website.\textsuperscript{14} While many have high traffic or 'hits' to their sites, newspaper companies have yet to find a revenue model to make online news pay for its journalism.

Concurrent with technological and cultural change, Australian newspaper ownership structures altered in the latter part of the last century resulting in further concentration of ownership.\textsuperscript{15} In Australia, as in Britain and North America, family dynasties had owned and operated vast numbers of daily metropolitan newspapers.\textsuperscript{16} For economic and social reasons many of these businesses were sold and bought by consortiums, or converted to publically listed companies.\textsuperscript{17} The exception in Australia is News Limited, which is the subsidiary of News Corporation, and although it has many institutional investors, Rupert Murdoch still largely controls the monolithic media company. Murdoch controls 40 per cent of votes attached to shares owing to a two-tiered share structure whereby equity shares have no voting rights.\textsuperscript{18} In many Western states, media ownership converged as media corporations bought

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 635.
\textsuperscript{14} Ricketson, M. \textit{Australian Journalism Today}, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p 145.
several mastheads to form a chain. It also saw many cities, particularly in the USA, become for the first time single masthead towns.\(^{19}\)

Concentration of media ownership can narrow editorial choices for readers.\(^{20}\) Under a corporate structure, newspaper publishers must consider diverse internal interests, some of which are competing. These interests can include shareholder, advertiser and reader considerations, which need to be balanced alongside responsible economic management.\(^{21}\) Consequently, media commentators' concerns about journalism standards such as a potential lack of plurality of opinion and diversity of stories can arise in cities with one daily masthead.\(^{22}\)

Australian media takeovers, due to law changes in the late 1980s, significantly contributed to Australia losing all of its daily evening newspapers. This reduction in mastheads caused falls in newspaper penetration irrevocably by 50 per cent during this period;\(^{23}\) whether it was the lack of newspaper choice, or the loss of a favourite masthead, many readers abandoned the newspaper buying habit altogether during this time.

Concentration of media ownership and the loss of mastheads over time have significance for investigative journalism because there are fewer mastheads available in Australia to publish it. The general news story trend during the 1990s drifted from 'hard' news to 'soft' news in Australia.\(^{24}\) Editors embraced this trend in attempts to bolster sales by capturing the biggest, broadest readership, and appealing to readers from the then lucrative magazine market.\(^{25}\)


\(^{21}\) Ibid., pp. 152-154.


\(^{25}\) Ibid.
Media academics have labelled this process in terms such as 'dumbing down', 'newzsak'\(^{26}\) and the 'tabloidisation' of news.\(^{27}\)

Falling newspaper revenues triggered cost cutting, and the reduction of full-time editorial staff; the latest round at the time of writing was 3000 editorial jobs across News Limited, Fairfax Media and Channel 10 in June 2012.\(^{28}\) Many newspapers, internationally and in Australia, limited expensive journalism by cutting back resources for foreign bureaus, and investigative journalism units.\(^{29}\) Investigative or watchdog journalism takes considerable time, and produces fewer stories than other genres of reporting because of the detailed nature of the reporter's work. Investigative journalism is expensive also because it runs a higher risk of attracting litigation and other legal costs due to its scrutiny of those with power who might seek to curtail investigations.\(^{30}\) Herein is a conundrum for investigative journalism. With falling newspaper revenues, which media outlets or institutions can afford to sponsor this type of expensive journalism in the future?

In Australia, investigative reporting has tended to be the domain of newspapers, especially broadsheet newspapers, and non-commercial television networks, such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and Special Broadcasting Service (SBS). These media traditionally attract a discerning, educated audience concerned about public accountability and transparency of powerful figures.\(^{31}\) Further, broadsheets have in the past had time, staff and money to pursue lengthy, difficult investigations. Tabloid newspapers also produce some investigative journalism, including award-winning journalism. However, typically their editors have had different news values to their broadsheet counterparts. Australian tabloids

\(^{26}\) Franklin, B. ed., *Pulling Newspapers Apart: Analysing Print Journalism*, p. 16.
\(^{29}\) Guthrie, B. 'Interview with the author,' 11 February 2010; Kelley, S. 'Investigative Reporting, Democracy, and the Crisis in Journalism,' in *Centre Blog*, Ottawa: The Canadian Centre for Investigative Reporting, 21 May 2009.
\(^{31}\) McNair, B. *Journalism and Democracy: An Evaluation of the Political Public Sphere*, London: Routledge, 2000, p. 16; Masters, C. 'Interview with the author,' 15 February 2011; Beecher, E. 'Interview with the author,' 12 May 2011.
generally are less committed to sponsoring lengthy investigative stories and do not have the page size to display longer stories. Generally, tabloid stories are targeted toward a readership whose interests are predominantly daily news, entertainment and sport.\textsuperscript{32}

Similarly, broadcast and online media are generally more adept at delivering breaking news. Their strength is speed, not depth. They employ fewer journalists compared to newspapers. Newspapers are the single largest employers of full-time journalists.\textsuperscript{33} It is true that some 'quality' investigative journalism is broadcast on Australian television;\textsuperscript{34} there are well-recognised examples such as the ABC's \textit{Four Corners}, and from the commercial stations too, such as Channel 9's \textit{60 Minutes} and Channel 7's \textit{Sunday Night} programs among others. But, it is contended here that the greatest proportion of Australian investigative journalism has originated from broadsheet newspapers. How cost cutting has affected the quantity and 'quality' of Australian investigative journalism found in broadsheet newspapers are key research questions of this thesis.

This thesis considers what, if any, have been the consequences of the reported paradigmatic shift in newspaper news values from 'hard news' to 'soft news' or tabloidisation of broadsheets? Soft news serves to entertain rather than to critically inform its audience. This thesis will examine if there is evidence of an editorial preference for soft news, and if so whether it threatens the normative role that investigative journalism has played in safeguarding democracy by holding those with power to account. The relationship between journalism and democracy — whereby the media is often considered the 'Fourth Estate' because of its normative role is well established,\textsuperscript{35} and discussed in Chapter Three. Openness, transparency and accountability of the elected representatives to the people have been central tenets of a well-functioning democracy. The print media has been recognised for this role — no less in the first amendment of the US Constitution.\textsuperscript{36} In Australia, the role is not codified

\textsuperscript{32} Guthrie, B. 'Interview with the author,' 11 February 2010.
\textsuperscript{36} The first amendment of the US Constitution: 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right
in law, but recognised in High Court interpretations of its Constitution, and successive inquiries into the print media.37

Informed public discourse in the public sphere is vital for a well-functioning democracy. German political scientist Jürgen Habermas famously defined the public sphere as the communal, communicative space for critical-rational discourse in which, 'private people come together as a public'.38 Or, as media academic Michael Schudson noted, Habermas' account was 'a normative model of exemplary civic life'.39 In Habermas' seminal text on the subject, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, he chronologically details the rise and fall of the public sphere, finally condemning it in the twenty-first century as no more than an illusion, corrupted by the commercialisation of the mass media.40 His later writings have somewhat revised this very pessimistic conclusion.

While Habermas' critical theory had earlier plotted the demise of the public sphere, there was at this time thoughtful scholarly criticism including that of Nancy Fraser, Geoff Eley, Keith Baker and Nicholas Garnham,41 arguing that the public sphere was never singular, but multifarious, and these spheres continue to function.

Investigative journalism can inform these public spheres. It, by definition, can investigate institutions and individuals with power in society, and contest whether that power is exercised appropriately and responsibly. It makes hard-to-come-by information available to the public, who can judge it, and use it ultimately to inform their vote. Investigative journalism can act as a watchdog that, when performed well, can promote democracy.

However, a prevailing view from scholars and media professionals, and a contention that is tested in this thesis, is that print investigative journalism is under threat because of the

40 Ibid., p. 171.
aforementioned technological, social, economic and political changes affecting newspapers, which has resulted in fewer mastheads, and smaller revenues to spend on this form of journalism.

So, it is put forward here, that if broadsheet newspapers in Australia now have smaller revenues, media organisations might have a decreased interest in expending resources on lengthy, expensive investigations, than previously. If this is the case, then the public sphere/s — which inform Australian democracy — are provided with fewer print investigative stories. It is also contended that investigative journalism might be less likely to be replenished by other media, such as online and television, because in the main, these media in Australia focus on breaking news, rather than in-depth stories. Further, free-to-air television in Australia has faced similar structural economic problems as print — with the exception of public broadcasters, who face their own fiscal difficulties ensuring enough public funding from each federal budget cycle. Put another way, founder of the US Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, Tom Rosenstiel, argued that with fewer investigative newspaper stories society might be reaching a point where: 'We won't know what we won't know'.

Aim and Approach

The identified problem is that Australian print newspapers' circulations and revenues are in decline, so the question is how is this affecting broadsheet newspaper's contribution to investigative journalism? The aim of this thesis, therefore, is to examine the role of broadsheet investigative journalism from its highly profitable past through to the current digital era of declining print advertising revenues to support it.

To achieve this aim, an extensive content analysis spanning five decades of investigative journalism in five Australian mastheads is undertaken, as well as 22 interviews with media industry professionals, academics and investigative journalists, and an analysis of the peer reviewed Walkley Awards for investigative journalism since 1956. In particular, this content

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analysis will focus on whether or not the scope and type of stories investigated have changed. Finally, a third content analysis is performed on selected news websites, with no financial attachment to established print media, to see if they are contributing investigative journalism independent of newspapers.

**Scope**

Whilst the thesis will draw on overseas examples for comparative analysis, and as a basis for identifying trends in print journalism, this thesis specifically examines investigative journalism in the broadsheet market in Australia. This is because Australian print newspapers' economic future is tenuous. Further, there is a dearth of research and literature about the role and state of investigative journalism in Australia as a consequence of print newspapers' decline. Other researchers have looked at the input of investigative reporting to the public sphere from Australian broadcasters such as the ABC's *Four Corners* program.\(^{43}\) Also, there has been some research into which medium has won the major Walkley awards.\(^{44}\) But there has not been a comprehensive study of Australian print investigative journalism.

This thesis is primarily concerned with broadsheets' investigative role because these newspapers are economically challenged in the digital era, so much so that two of the major daily metropolitan newspapers, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, will convert to tabloid from March 2013 to stem costs.\(^{45}\) Their investigative journalism has played an important public interest role in the past. Among broadsheets' collective achievements from investigations have been public inquiries such as royal commissions, the removal from office of improper ministers, and jailing of corrupt public figures, including senior police officers. For these reasons, this study is focused on the input of investigative journalism to the Australian public sphere from broadsheet newspapers, and what it would mean for Australian investigative journalism if broadsheets, or those styled in the broadsheet tradition, were to demise.


\(^{45}\) Hywood, G. 'Fairfax of the Future Initiatives,' *2012 Full Year Result Investor Briefing,* Sydney: Fairfax Media, 23 August 2012.
The scope of this thesis does not empirically examine newsroom resources or budgets. Nor does it survey audiences about their interest in, or concern for, investigative journalism. This is because this thesis is concerned with broadsheets' investigative content — its published output — over time. The objective is to see what investigative journalism has existed, what has actually been produced, irrespective of other mitigating factors. This study does examine online investigative journalism, and specifically analyses selected nascent news sites with no attachments to the established media, to investigate whether the future of investigative journalism might belong with this medium, and to test if it is capable of replicating broadsheets' historic provision of investigative journalism in the future.

Media ownership is heavily concentrated in Australia, the highest in the Western world.\textsuperscript{46} This means there are fewer independent newspapers to pursue investigative journalism than in other countries. Also, internationally there are varied funding models for investigative journalism beyond newspaper advertising revenues, such as philanthropy and specific government subsidies and grants. These revenue forms have yet to play a major role in providing Australians with investigative journalism. The concentrated ownership of the Australian press also means there are fewer options for publishing investigative journalism if a print proprietor were to reduce or abandon resources for this type of reporting.

Thus, because print broadsheet newspapers have provided investigative journalism in the past, the impact of editorial cost cutting should be detectable by quantitatively analysing broadsheets' content over time. This is why content analyses are the predominant methods undertaken in this study.

It is true that other types of reporting also inform the public sphere, such as political reporting. However, this is outside the scope of this thesis. One reason, other than space and time considerations, is that political reporting, and the rising trend of political opinion and analysis is not as expensive as investigative journalism to produce, and is readily available in all media — particularly online, through blogs and social networking sites. Thus, the ailing

\textsuperscript{46} Tiffen, R. 'Political Economy and News,' p. 38.
business model of print is not likely to reduce political commentary (which is proliferating in other media whether informed or not) as it might impact on investigative reporting.

In terms of theoretical limitations, this thesis focuses, but not exclusively, on public sphere theory as ascribed by Jürgen Habermas, and uses his critical theory as a foundation to evaluate contemporary media research and debates about the state of the public sphere. Habermas' theory is a multi-disciplinary approach that has become the normative model for understanding the public sphere. Habermas also provides an engaging trajectory describing the beginning, and perhaps the end, of newspapers' contributions to the public sphere. Furthermore, Habermas' theory is widely critiqued, and remains a germane narrative for media analysis today. Habermas is a useful starting point for understanding the newspapers' theoretical role of informing the public sphere in Australian society.

Structure of the Study

To achieve the outlined aim, Chapters Two and Three are background and theory review chapters. Chapter Two examines the history of broadsheet newspapers and investigative journalism in Australia. It examines the definition of investigative journalism, and traces the academic literature to identify characteristics of watchdog journalism. This chapter also details the challenges investigative journalism is facing. It provides evidence to show the extent of falling newspaper circulation figures and revenues in Australia and internationally. It discusses the technological changes affecting print hardcopy newspapers (freeze frame media) and their adaption to digital multimedia forms (flow media). It outlines audience responses to these changes, particularly the Internet-savvy younger generations.

The focus of Chapter Three is to review the current literature and theory about the relationships between the news media, the public sphere and democracy. It begins with Jürgen Habermas' major text on the public sphere. It also examines contemporaneous debate about what is journalism, including the role of citizen journalism, and the interactive and collaborative role that audiences are playing in the news gathering process that has transformed the traditional models of journalism. This chapter identifies the 'gaps' in the
current literature about investigative journalism, and explains where this research might be situated to provide original scholarly insights.

Chapter Four details the research methods this thesis will use to address identified omissions in the literature. It explains why these particular methods were selected, and why others were not.

Chapters Five through to Eight will reveal and explain the research results. These four chapters are based on six research questions that have arisen out of the background and literature review chapters, and are explained in Chapter Four, which is dedicated to the thesis' research design. The results from each of the four methods used are spread throughout each of these results chapters.

In the final chapter, results about print investigative journalism are evaluated and discussed in the context of the identified problem of declining circulations and revenues of newspapers in Australia. The discussion draws on the background and theory review chapters and identifies new insights that address some omissions in the academic literature. Appraisals are made about the future direction of print broadsheet newspapers, and their role in providing investigative journalism for Australians in the future. It also includes suggestions for further research, and reaches final conclusions about the state of the relationship between broadsheet investigative journalism, the public sphere and Australian democracy.
CHAPTER TWO

Paper Cuts: 'Rivers Of Gold' to the Digital Economy

SECTION I

Introduction

This background chapter is divided into two sections. The first will provide a brief history of some of Australia's key broadsheet newspapers and introduce the historical role that broadsheet newspapers have played in delivering Australians 'quality' investigative journalism, including examining what this term means. It will look at selected scholarly discourse on the definition of investigative journalism, and elaborate upon the features that help differentiate this journalism genre from daily news reporting. Section two will show how investigative journalism is under threat because of the malaise of the print newspaper market. Using various parameters, it will trace the trajectory of Australian newspapers revenues and circulations from the heady days of the 1980s until 2012. This section will provide a comprehensive picture of the financial predicament facing the Australian print newspaper industry, exacerbated by the 2008/09 Global Financial Crisis (GFC), and importantly, its implications for print investigative journalism.

A Brief History of Key Australian Newspapers

Australia's first newspaper was the Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser, first produced on 5 March 1803 under government control. It was a weekly paper with the specified purpose of delivering information from England to the colonies. Government censorship was lifted in 1824 and soon independent newspapers began to arise. Among the earliest were the Sydney Morning Herald (known as the Sydney Herald from 1831-1841) in New South Wales, and in

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Melbourne, *The Age*, in 1854.⁴ In the British tradition of the time, they were broadsheet newspapers.

Print newspapers were flourishing at the end of the 19th century. By 1848, there were 11 daily Australian newspapers.⁵ By 1886 there were 48 daily papers, including regionals. In the 20th century, by 1958, the total number of dailies had grown to 54.⁶ This peaked at 56 in 1984 — when profits were high, and advertising revenues were considered 'liquid gold'. It was not to last. Towards the end of the 1980s, media takeovers, due to cross-media ownership law changes, saw Australia lose all of its daily evening newspapers.⁷ During this destabilising time of print media company acquisitions and mergers, 12 of the 19 metropolitan daily newspapers changed hands; three of them changed ownership twice.⁸

The demise of afternoon papers was due to factors beyond the 1980s takeover frenzy, including lifestyle changes; the success of television evening news; the financial hardship of the 1990s; and the rise of the Internet. Thus, by 2008, the overall number of Australian daily papers — including regionals — slipped back to its late 19th century figure of 48.⁹

Of these 48 daily papers, 11 were daily metropolitan papers; half the number of daily metropolitan papers produced at the turn of the twentieth century. Figure 2.1 shows the number of metropolitan dailies and owners in Australia from the absolute peak of 26 (not including daily regionals) then published by 21 separate proprietors in 1923,¹⁰ compared to the high concentration of newspaper ownership in 2013, unchanged since 2008.

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⁵ Ibid., p. 44.
⁶ Ibid.
Figure 2.1: The Number of Australian Daily Metropolitan Newspapers Over Time

![Chart showing concentration of Australian print media](chart.png)

*Source: Analysis of data in Tiffen, R. 'Trends in Newspaper Circulation and Ownership,' p. 1.*

Figure 2.1 clearly shows newspaper ownership in Australia became more concentrated as the number of surviving metropolitan newspapers decreased. To give this an international context, the United States, admittedly a nation with a much larger population, had 1,387 daily weekday newspapers in 2009. But like Australia, the United States had also experienced significant decline in the total number of daily mastheads. For example, the United States had 1,878 daily weekday newspapers in 1940 — this was a 26 per cent fall in its number of daily mastheads over 59 years.\(^\text{11}\) As in Australia, most of the loss from the 1970s until 2000 was due to the death of evening daily papers. Since then the loss of mastheads has been a steady fall in the number of morning daily mastheads. Further, in the last century, 689 United States cities had competing daily paid newspapers. By 2009, ownership had concentrated significantly, so that only 13 cities remained with competing daily mastheads; in comparison, Australia has two cities with competing mastheads: Melbourne and Sydney.\(^\text{12}\) Due to the GFC, many of the surviving single-town newspapers in the United States have struggled financially.\(^\text{13}\) But, it is Australia that now has the highest newspaper ownership concentration of any developed economy, with almost 90 per cent of its daily papers owned by two

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\(^{13}\) Ibid.
proprietors: News Limited and Fairfax Media.\textsuperscript{14} By international comparison, Portugal has the second highest concentration of print media ownership (77 per cent) when studying the market share of a nation's two largest print companies.\textsuperscript{15}

There are three major metropolitan print media owners in Australia as of 2013. Measured by circulation, the third largest is Seven West Media, which is controlled by businessman Kerry Stokes. Among Seven West's diverse media businesses (television, magazines, radio, online and regional newspapers) it owns the daily tabloid, the \textit{West Australian}, which has the largest circulation in that state.\textsuperscript{16} Second largest is Fairfax Media, which is owned by investors and individual shareholders and has media interests in magazines, radio, online and metropolitan and regional newspapers. Fairfax's largest shareholder, at the time of writing, was Australian miner Gina Rinehart (her shareholding fluctuated between 11 and 19 per cent during 2012), followed by Dr Simon Marais, an investment fund manager with Allan Gray, who holds around 11 per cent of Fairfax shares. Fairfax Media owns three metropolitan daily broadsheets, \textit{The Age}, the \textit{SMH} and the \textit{Canberra Times}. However, the first two of these are confirmed to become tabloids in March 2013.\textsuperscript{17}

The largest of Australia's print proprietors is News Limited.\textsuperscript{18} At the time of publishing, it is a local subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's international News Corporation (this subsidiary relationship is discussed in more detail later in the chapter). News Limited is also a multi-platform media company with interests in pay television, magazines, online and newspapers. It owns almost 150 national, metropolitan, suburban, regional and Sunday print titles, including mass audience daily metropolitans sold in every state and territory except Western

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Carson, A. 'Death by 1900 Cuts: Will Quality Journalism Thrive under Fairfax's New Model?' in \textit{The Conversation}, 18 June 2012.
\end{flushright}
Australia.¹⁹ News Limited owns Australia's only general news national daily broadsheet, *The Australian*.

**The Sydney Morning Herald**

The *SMH* was once a weekly newspaper called the *Sydney Herald*, and it is the oldest continuously published newspaper in Australia.²⁰ It became a daily in 1840 and changed its name to the *Sydney Morning Herald* shortly thereafter.²¹ The *SMH* belonged to the Fairfax family after its founders sold it in 1841 for £10,000 to Charles Kemp and John Fairfax.²² In the 1920s, the *SMH*, under the control of two sons of Sir James Fairfax (Geoffrey and James Junior), was renowned for its conservative character.²³ Peculiar to the *SMH* was that its editors' responsibilities were limited to the leader page and editorial, the news was the responsibility of the chief-of-staff.²⁴ This division continued until 1965 when, as an employment condition, editor John D. Pringle insisted that his second-term reappointment would entitle him to editorial authority over the entire newspaper.²⁵ The values of the newspaper were described as adhering to: 'Christian belief, the rule of law, family life and all the middle class virtues,' according to the great grandson of John Fairfax, Sir Warwick Fairfax, who wrote a 140th anniversary editorial for the newspaper in 1971.²⁶

Pringle's changes were the beginning of an important transition for the newspaper's conservatism and for its investigative journalism. Media academic Julianne Schultz argued that by the 1980s the professionalism and assertiveness of the newspaper's journalists saw a new era emerge that hotly contested the bureaucratic style of management in which

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²⁴ Ibid.
accountants were dominant. Pringle had made other historic changes, including bringing female reporters into the newsroom, rather than restricting them to writing for the society pages. In 2012, after many company share ownership permutations, the newspaper still belongs to the Fairfax Media stable of newspapers and media assets; its political leaning could perhaps be best described as more right-wing than its sister paper, *The Age*, but less so and more centralist than its broadsheet rival *The Australian*.

*The Age*

Of Australia's 11 existing daily metropolitan papers, the oldest surviving broadsheet in Victoria is Melbourne's *The Age*. Brothers John and Henry Cooke launched the paper during the turmoil of Victoria's gold rush in 1854. Two years later, facing financial difficulties, the paper was sold to the Syme brothers. It became a public company in 1948 and a hostile takeover bid in 1972 saw it sold to its minor shareholders, John Fairfax and Sons — owners of the *SMH* — but *The Age* retained its company name of David Syme & Co. Its 'golden era' is often cited as the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Graham Perkin edited the paper (1966-1975). Under his editorship it was voted alongside the *Washington Post*, and London's *The Times* as one of the world's top 10 broadsheets, in part, for its commitment to investigative reporting. But in terms of circulation, its 'golden era' was several years after Perkin, under the editorships of Michael Davie and Creighton Burns, when Monday to Friday circulation peaked in 1981 at more than 250,000 sold copies a day. Its tabloid competitors' circulations peaked in the decade before.

*The Age*’s darker days financially came in the 1990s when Fairfax lost control of the company in December 1990 after Warwick Fairfax junior took on too much debt attempting

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27 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., p. 505.
to buy out family members in a takeover bid. Rival publishers, Kerry Packer and Canadian Conrad Black, bought and sold stakes during this tumultuous period and ignited fierce debate about foreign media ownership laws. The federal government imposed caps on their shareholdings and ruled against Packer and Black forming a joint bid for Fairfax. Black, with United States merchant bank Hellman and Friedman Partners, became the majority shareholder (capped at 15 per cent, and later lifter to 25 per cent), and its company name changed to the Tourang Consortium.

John Fairfax Holdings was floated on the Australian Stock Exchange in 1992. In 1996, Black divested his interest to New Zealand's Brierley Investments. In 1999, The Age's company name changed again to The Age Company limited, a subsidiary of John Fairfax Holdings. Like so many newspaper companies, The Age was no longer family-owned, but part of a media consortium belonging predominantly to fund managers and investors.

*The Australian*

*The Australian* began publication on 15 July 1964. At the time, Rupert Murdoch owned three other mastheads in Australia, which were considered downmarket tabloids that relied heavily on crime stories and cheap classified advertising sales, including ads for brothels. *The Australian* was the nation's first national broadsheet newspaper and some at the time said it was created to appease Murdoch's mother Dame Elizabeth Murdoch who had urged her son to produce a 'quality' broadsheet newspaper. Its mission statement was to bring readers, 'impartial information and independent thinking that are essential to the further advance of our country'. Although heavily subsidised by News Limited's other papers, the Murdoch broadsheet did what no other Australian paper was doing at the time; it combined the latest overseas design with clever, innovative journalism, former Age Editor (1989-92) Mike Smith

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36 Guthrie, B. *Man Bites Murdoch*, p. 166.
39 Ibid., p. 226.
40 Ibid., p. 227.
said. The Australian remains the only national newspaper for general interest news, and promotes a commitment to investigative journalism, launching a dedicated unit in 2010. Leading the unit was investigative journalist, Hedley Thomas, who has five Walkley Awards for investigative journalism, including the prestigious Gold Walkley in 2007. His winning story exposed the unsubstantiated police and federal government allegations of terrorist activities against Queensland doctor Mohamed Haneef.

The Australian is viewed by some — academics, politicians and commentators — as the 'country's most important newspaper,' primarily, because in modern times under the editorship of Chris Mitchell it is seen as pursuing a right-wing agenda and ruthlessly exercising, 'power without responsibility'. Robert Manne, himself accused of left-wing bias by News Limited columnists argued that Mitchell, as The Australian's editor-in-chief (since 2003), was committed to 'advancing the causes of neoliberalism in economics and neoconservatism in the sphere of foreign policy.' Former Greens leader Bob Brown also accused The Australian and other News Limited newspapers of belonging to the 'hate media', which opposed leftist viewpoints, particularly opposing individuals advocating action over climate change. However, others, such as former tabloid and broadsheet editor Bruce Guthrie, note that The Australian's editor Chris Mitchell was an effective editor who 'had done a good job at The Courier-Mail during his seven years there, although there was one very serious mis-step.' Guthrie argued that Mitchell whilst editor at the Courier Mail was found to be in the wrong when he portrayed historian Manning Clark as an agent of the Soviets during the Cold War.

41 Ibid.
44 Ibid., p. 5.
46 Manne, R. 'Bad News: Murdoch's Australian and the Shaping of the Nation,' p. 3.
The National Times

Seven years after The Australian's first edition, Fairfax launched its national masthead the National Times. From 1971 it was published weekly and was founded by Vic Carroll, previously managing editor of The Australian Financial Review (AFR). At the beginning of its production it was a tabloid-sized newspaper, but by the time of its demise it had converted to a broadsheet. Although a tabloid for most of its publishing days, its content and readership were more like that of a broadsheet. For example, its mission was to uncover 'the news behind the news', and analyse rather than tell news stories. After 16 years of publication it closed, but it broke many of the nation's biggest stories at that time through its investigative reporting. Media academic David McKnight has credited the National Times with producing some of Australia's best investigative journalism:

The 1980s was a 'golden age' of investigative journalism in Australia, of whom the best known outlets were the National Times newspaper and ABC TV's Four Corners program. The period spawned a number of royal commissions, several ministers of the crown resigned or were sacked, and the issue of corruption in politics and the police force was firmly established in the public mind as never before.

McKnight identified two peaks for investigative reporting: immediately post war, 'when the hopes of a post war “new order” were high', and in the decade of the late 1970s and early 1980s responding to the 'cultural and political' revolution of the late 1960s. Interestingly, the latter period also coincided with the golden era for Australia's daily newspaper circulations. Other media academics, such as Julianne Schultz writing in the late 1990s, also considered the 1980s a pinnacle time for Australian investigative journalism.

According to McKnight, the first crest of investigative journalism was popularly termed

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51 Ibid.
muckraking or exposure journalism. It often involved investigations directed at single targets, such as a substandard doctor. The latter style differed in that it had a broader social reform agenda, and would include bigger targets or more systemic investigations, for example, a series reporting the ailing health system or investigating a corrupt health Minister and department. United States media academics James Ettema and Theordore Glasser reiterate this point, stating that in the modern era, investigative journalists favoured stories that transcended the details of a case study. Instead, they tended to focus on a broader trend or failure of a system rather than individual grievances.

There is always a degree of subjectivity about identifying which Australian media organisations have the most impressive record for investigative journalism. McKnight nominates the National Times, whilst former Age investigative reporter Ben Hills, also the biographer of Graham Perkin, argues The Age outshone competitors with its investigative reporting. He wrote: 'At The Age, especially, there is an unbroken stream of dedicated — and decorated — investigative reporters dating from the founding of Insight up until today."

The Broadsheet Tradition

Another former editor, Bruce Guthrie, who edited several Melbourne papers including the nation's largest selling tabloid, the Herald Sun, also identified investigative journalism as a key point of difference (the other being its political coverage) between Australian broadsheets and their competitors.

Broadsheets have produced much of Australia's award-winning investigative reporting. This is not to claim tabloids do not produce 'quality' investigative journalism, or that it is solely the domain of broadsheets. As mentioned, the ABC's Four Corners television program has a long history of award-winning investigative journalism. But, it is also true that,

56 Ibid., p. 311.
internationally, broadsheets have built a reputation for pursuing and publishing significant investigative stories, from the Washington Post in the United States to the London's Sunday Times to Melbourne's Age.

The broadsheet tradition came from Britain, and was related to the size of the column inches of the paper afforded by the technology of the printing press of the day. There was also a government disincentive to make the pages smaller. A 1712 British tax on newspapers was charged according to the number of pages.\(^58\) Broad sheets meant less tax. In London, The Times acquired its own printing press and published daily from 1814. Tabloid newspapers did not proliferate until the start of the twentieth century long after the tax was repealed. 'Tabloid' was a word coined by London pharmaceutical company Burroughs Wellcome & Co. to describe compressed tablets in the 1880s.\(^59\) As in the compressed tablets, tabloid papers were disparagingly seen as easy-to-digest 'compressed' journalism, and were also the domicile of 'yellow' journalism and 'penny' press, scorned for its sensationalism in the 1880s.\(^60\)

Globally, the distinction between the editorial content of the broadsheets compared to the tabloids was no longer simply determined by page size. Previously, the larger format papers were associated with a higher income-earning readership, and were considered a mark of style and authority. This divide blurred when many large format papers converted to 'compact' to make it easier for the commuter to read, and to bolster sales.\(^61\) In Britain, the papers previously labelled broadsheets were now more accurately termed elites, referring to their content rather than their size to distinguish between them.\(^62\) Editorially, their content was information dense and committed to the coverage of politics,\(^63\) even though many

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\(^{62}\) McNair, B. Journalism and Democracy: An Evaluation of the Political Public Sphere, London: Routledge, 2000, p. 16.

\(^{63}\) According to Brian McNair, who has quantified the difference in political coverage between the elites and the corresponding tabloids of popular papers, greater editorial resources were given to political coverage at the elite
converted from broadsheet to compact size.64

However, in Australia, the symbolic and physical difference between the two varying sized papers still largely existed in 2012, with the broadsheet papers of the *SMH*, *The Age* and *The Australian* generally having readers from a higher socio-economic background, often termed A and B demographics, or shortened to AB.65 The now defunct *National Times* and Fairfax's *AFR* are an exception — a tabloid-sized national daily, but also with an AB demographic.66 Collectively, readers of *The Australian*, *SMH* and *The Age* represent a well-educated audience with larger disposable incomes compared to tabloid readers.67 Broadsheet audiences in Australia are 'highly interested in politics,' and research has shown these newspapers provide more political news than tabloids.68 As noted, they are owned by Australia's two largest newspaper holdings: Fairfax Media (*The Age*, *SMH*) and Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation's Australian subsidiary, News Limited (*The Australian*).

The now defunct *National Times*, a weekly broadsheet, which started as a tabloid, won many Walkley awards for its investigative pieces. Between them, these four mastheads form a comprehensive sample of Australian broadsheets. In terms of geographical reach, *The Australian* holds the special title of the nation's only national broadsheet. *The Age* and *SMH* cover Australia's two largest cities, Melbourne and Sydney respectively. The papers also represent both Australia's major newspaper publishers: Fairfax Media and News Limited respectively.

**A Critical Perspective on Investigative Journalism**

Before moving on to examine the outlook for investigative journalism in the print media, it is worth noting some alternative positions about the value and motivations behind investigative

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66 Guerra C. 'Interview with the author,' 12 November 2010.
67 McNair, B. *Journalism and Democracy: An Evaluation of the Political Public Sphere*, p. 16.
journalism, which are less flattering about this reporting genre than is generally represented.

There is a view that investigative journalism in the modern era is just another marketing exercise of a newspaper — a point of distinction to appeal to a particular demographic. For example, media academic and journalist Margaret Simons observed in her 2007 book about the Australian media, that in contemporary times the middle class has swollen, and politics has drifted towards the centre, away from the ideological poles of left and right. Consequently, without a strong ideological political reform agenda, and with class warfare subdued, the media in Australia have become a much tamer beast than previously. Simons also argued that investigative journalists and their motivations have changed. They, like much of society, have joined the middle class ranks, and their economic comfort has quelled the revolutionary spirit that had driven some investigative journalism.

A more pessimistic position is held by US academics Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman who see the Western media as serving the interests of capitalism (discussed further in Chapter Three). In Australia, Keith Windschuttle and also Humphrey McQueen have argued that journalism — and not just investigative journalism, but more broadly — supports the ruling class because it fails to challenge normative power structures, but rather it is a vehicle to 'manufacture consent'.

A different viewpoint, but one which also questions the motivation behind, and the value of, investigative journalism in Australia, is that of David McKnight. He concluded that, in the 1960s and early 1970s, investigative journalism was, at times, manipulated to camouflage government agendas. McKnight traced references to unnamed security forces, particularly in the pages of the now obsolete Bulletin magazine — often praised for its investigative journalism, and belonging to media magnate Kerry Packer since 1960 (it closed in 2008).

70 Ibid., p. 50.
McKnight found that Australia's secret intelligence agency ASIO used ideologically sympathetic journalists to pursue its anti-Communism agenda. Under the editorships of Donald Horne, and later his successor former liberal politician Peter Coleman, the investigative series published in the weekly news magazine using ASIO contacts to denounce Communism, helped revitalise the Bulletin's circulation. The Bulletin was not an isolated example of journalists' overdependence on unnamed sources and compromised reporting. McKnight also obtained evidence demonstrating a deferential relationship between ASIO and television program-maker Robert Raymond, one of the founders of ABC's Four Corners.

There are two points that should be made here. First, McKnight was clear in acknowledging that investigative reporting did become more critical after this period, when the second wave of investigative reporting began in the 1970s and 1980s, stemming from the revolutionary movements of the 1960s. Second, he warned that journalists were perennially vulnerable to the phenomenon of overdependence on sources, and vigilance was thus required to ensure journalists were not manipulated or complicit with promoting hidden agendas. McKnight also observed that a rise in the use of 'unnamed security' sources in the media since the declaration of 'War on Terror' in 2001 might again signify the media being part of others' propaganda campaigns. There has been significant research into the source-journalist relationship. United States academic Michael Schudson noted that most studies find that power resides with officials when 'the bureaucracies cater to the reporter's occupational imperative by providing a reliable and steady supply of the raw materials of news production'. Investigative journalists often rely on unnamed sources and therefore are not immune to this phenomenon. United States' academic studies of 'embedding' journalists within army units in Iraq and Afghanistan documented recent examples of this undesirable dependency relationship.

Notwithstanding these studies, it is the general contention here that broadsheet newspapers have added valuable investigative reporting to the public sphere, and this contribution is

75 Ibid., p. 10.
76 Ibid., p. 13.
under threat with declining newspaper revenues to fund this type of time-consuming and often expensive journalism. These propositions will be tested in this thesis.

**Print Revenue Decline and Investigative Journalism**

The decline of traditional funding models for print newspapers, arising from myriad of changes including technological advancement and commercialisation of the Internet (making it attractive to advertisers, to the detriment of print) has led many academics and practitioners to suggest 'quality' investigative journalism is under threat.\(^\text{80}\)

For example, when asked at an editors' international conference about the future of investigative journalism, Mike van Niekerk, the then editor-in-chief of Online at Fairfax Media, spoke words of caution:

> The economics of new media make it very difficult to fund investigative journalism in the same way it once was. If you're talking about the kind of journalism that keeps governments and corporations at check, I am concerned about its sustainability in the future.\(^\text{81}\)

In Australian democratic society, the exposure of corruption speaks as much about the state of the Australian media as it does about political efficacy. In the words of media and governance academic Rodney Tiffen, 'exposure of corruption is the cutting edge of democratic accountability'.\(^\text{82}\) Investigative journalism has a function in informing a healthy democracy, and this role is elaborated upon in the next chapter.

Investigative journalism is one means of exposing corruption, and therein, supporting democracy. But, investigative journalism is not easily defined.\(^\text{83}\) Among academics such as


\(^{82}\) Tiffen, R. *Scandals, Media, Politics & Corruption in Contemporary Australia*, p. 2.

\(^{83}\) Correspondence with Rodney Tiffen Emeritus Professor, Government and International Relations, the University of Sydney, 12 January 2011; Dr David McKnight, Associate Professor, Journalism and Media Research Centre, University of New South Wales, 13 January 2011; Professor Brian McNair, Queensland University of Technology, 4 January 2011.
Hugo de Burgh, Tiffen, Schudson and others who have attempted to define it, there is common agreement that the investigative journalist's role was to: expose injury and injustice; reveal information in the public interest; and, where necessary, promote legislative reform to correct a wrong, legal or administrative loophole.

Developed economies have echoed concern about the future of print investigative journalism. Surveyed at an annual United States' investigative reporters and editors conference, investigative reporters were collectively pessimistic about the future of investigative journalism, describing publishers' priorities as more about 'profits than Pulitzers'.

In Britain, a similar concern has been noted. Eamonn O'Neill, an award-winning investigative reporter who spent 11 years pursuing the wrongful imprisonment of convicted murderer Robert Brown among others, lamented that he had worked for less experienced editors who would not support his efforts to take on miscarriage of justice projects because they 'feared and avoided such stories. The hassle affected their career prospects.'

O'Neill stated that he had also encountered editors who did support investigative work, but for shallow reasons: 'They want easy results and clichéd tales instead of the complex truth.'

On one occasion his story did not have the conclusion the editor expected so it was never published, and the public were left in the dark about its outcome. O'Neill observed that 'Investigations aren't as prominent as they once were, but that by no means indicates that the terrible crimes they should be uncovering have gone away.'

O'Neill's experiences again reflect the words of Tom Rosenstiel that without a commitment to investigative journalism there will be times when, as a public, 'we won't know what we won't know.'

Similarly, an Australian union survey by the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) members, found morale was low and pessimism high about the future of quality journalism due to financial pressures on proprietors. The MEAA found the number of

86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
journalists in full-time positions had fallen in recent years, and those who remained were required to perform broader roles within their news organisation. There was little time for investigative reporting outside a dedicated unit.\(^89\) One unnamed respondent wrote: 'Cost cutting has led to reduced staff, while roles have expanded, which is greatly affecting the quality of the paper. Morale in the newsroom is also very low.'\(^90\)

**Defining Investigative Journalism**

According to Tiffen, there are several features that distinguish 'quality' investigative reporting from straight news reporting: depth of research; journalist's demonstrated initiative and enterprise to produce the story; amount of resistance from vested interests; secrecy surrounding the topic; and the topic's importance and associated moral value to society.\(^91\)

Tiffen identified three general categories of investigative journalism: investigations of neglected issues — where the powerless are given a voice; revision of major events, such as an unsolved crime; and gathering new information by disclosing a secret wrongdoing.\(^92\) Tiffen stated that the third type of story was the least common, but pivotal in delivering information into the public sphere that would not otherwise be known. Often, these types of stories were difficult to authenticate, and there was no guarantee that a story would result from the investigation.\(^93\) The time and money taken to authenticate or discard a story were also factors that made investigative reporting expensive. Another was the potential for lengthy litigations either against the journalist, publisher or both.

Similar to Tiffen, Hugo de Burgh, a former investigative journalist, identified eight categories of investigative journalism. The defining features were:\(^94\)

- Identify shameful, even illegal, practices that transgress the moral code
- Reveal abuse of power

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\(^89\) MEAA. *Life in the Clickstream: The Future of Journalism*, p. 16.
\(^90\) Ibid.
\(^91\) Tiffen, R. *Scandals, Media, Politics & Corruption in Contemporary Australia*, p. 33.
\(^92\) Ibid.
\(^93\) Ibid., p. 33-34.
• Question the factual bases for significant assertions by the powerful
• Show justice has been corrupted
• Challenge an official account
• Demonstrate loopholes in the law
• Exposes gaps between profession and practice
• Disclose a cover-up

De Burgh's categories can overlap. For example, a story that shows that 'justice has been corrupted', might also 'challenge an official account' or 'expose gaps between profession and practice', and also at the same time 'disclose a cover-up'. In contrast, Tiffen's categories were fewer in number, but more distinct.

For these reasons, a new table has been constructed (see p. 31), which conflates Tiffen and de Burgh's typologies. It also incorporates, where appropriate, other scholars' contributions to defining investigative journalism. For example, United States-based Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) defined investigative journalism as:

The reporting through one's own work product and initiative matters of importance which some persons or organisations wish to keep secret. The three basic elements are that the investigation be the work of the reporter, not the report of an investigation made by someone else: that the subject of the story involves something of reasonable importance to the reader or viewer: and that others are attempting to hide these matters from the public.  

95 The IRE were among the first to identify that investigative journalism deals in matters of public importance, and that the story would not reach the public sphere were it not for the 'investigative' efforts of the reporter. These efforts take time and motivation. The IRE importantly also noted that investigative journalist's uncover information others want kept secret. Thus, secrecy can be an element that separates investigative reporting from daily journalism.

The new table has been created to articulate mutually exclusive categories that accurately, and succinctly, define distinct forms of investigative journalism. These will be the foundation for deriving an operational definition for investigative journalism.

At this point, it should be noted that scandalous behaviour and corruption are also exposed in the media through avenues other than investigative reporting. Other reporting mechanisms include observation of judicial proceedings, exposing political wrongdoing through parliamentary processes like Senate estimates, parliamentary Opposition claims, parliamentary question time, and eyewitness accounts at a crime scene among others.96 The concern of this chapter, and thesis, is what Tiffen described as the often small, but pivotal public interest revelations attained independently of vested interests exclusively through journalists' investigative efforts.

Tiffen emphasised that, more often than not, investigative reporting is about the detail behind information that may already be in the public sphere but lacking a context. He states that most investigative reporting is the result of 'the media's attempts to penetrate the mystery behind events which are already publicly known'.97 The issue being investigated need not be 'exclusive', but the arising story must be if it is to be called investigative.

Investigative journalism is further distinguishable by the amount of effort taken to find the story. For example, reactive daily news stories gathered by journalists attending press conferences, or reacting to press releases, can sometimes take an angle that is 'exclusive' but it is not investigative journalism as it usually does not require active investigation. Publisher of the Business Spectator Alan Kohler said that most of what is called 'quality' journalism is not. Rather, it can be reporting leaks by vested interests that supply journalists who wish to stay onside in order to continue obtaining stories.98 This is not quality investigative journalism because it does a disservice to the reader by failing to challenge the veracity of the information.

96 Tiffen, R. Scandals, Media, Politics & Corruption in Contemporary Australia, p. 46.
97 Ibid.
98 Kohler, A. 'Interview with the author,' 5 October 2010.
De Burgh argues that investigative journalism 'selects its own information and prioritises it in a different way'. It sets the agenda rather than responding to it. It operates outside of the cycle of leaked information and 'news drops' and in doing so plays an active role researching and revealing corruption and abuse of power by one or many within the state. De Burgh accepts that generalising about the genre is difficult; suffice to say that it involves power differentials that often tell the story of a victim and exposes a villain, whether individual or a collective, such as a government.

Therefore, targets of investigative reporting often possess power, such as a public figure head, or in the case of the collective, a government, bureaucracy, statutory authority, or a non-government entity such as a corporation with public functions, responsibilities or duty of care.

Ettema and Glasser argued that the investigative journalist's job was to 'look beyond what is conventionally acceptable, behind the interpretations of events provided for us by authorities and the authoritative'. They distinguished between daily reporters who 'often don't have to decide what they believe to be true in the same way that investigative reporters have to decide… daily reporters take responsibility for the accurate transcription of official discourse but not the veracity [sic] of that discourse'.

A very common, yet simple, definition of investigative journalism is 'pursuing a truth that someone wants hidden'. Editor of Britain's Guardian newspaper, Alan Rusbridger, qualified this simple definition by differentiating between exposure journalism and investigative journalism. He said that it was clear that not all revelations or 'truths' are worth pursuing, and particularly not in the name of the 'public interest'. He suggested that it was the 'quality' of the target, and its relationship to the public interest that elevated a story to the genre of quality investigative reporting, rather than mere smear or exposure journalism:

100 Ibid.
102 Ibid., p. 158.
103 De Burgh, H. Investigative Journalism, p. 15.
What's the public interest in a cricketer having a love romp in a hotel room ... But if elected representatives are arguing a case in Parliament but not revealing that they are being paid to do so, then that strikes at the heart of democracy. That's public interest, this is an easy distinction.¹⁰⁴

'Public interest' also becomes an important qualifier when defining what is 'quality' investigative journalism and what is not. De Burgh and Rusbridger both speak of 'public interest' much in the way that Tiffen does when he referred earlier to investigative journalism 'operating within a moral framework'. According to de Burgh and Rusbridger, investigative journalists police the boundaries between order and deviance, and thus appeal to a general public sense of existing standards of morality.¹⁰⁵

**Romanticising Investigative Journalism**

It is emerging from the academic discourse here that morality is an important aspect of investigative journalism. There is often a public preoccupation with romanticising the role of investigative journalists, as though they operate outside the established order.¹⁰⁶ This characterisation is familiar in cinematic portrayals about investigative reporters. One only needs to think of John Grisham's film *The Pelican Brief* (1993), or Al Pacino's portrayal of the *60 Minutes* reporter, Lowell Bergman, in *The Insider* (1999), with Russell Crowe portraying the role of the whistleblower, Jeffrey Wigand, to recognise the idealisation of investigative journalists and the fascination with the Watergate reporters. In fact, as de Burgh noted,¹⁰⁷ often contrary to these popularised images of investigative journalists, they in fact work very much within the boundaries of society. Their writing appeals to widespread moral standards or values of the public, even if the prevailing authority fails to reflect those normative moral values. Take the example of a Serbian investigative

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.
¹⁰⁶ Correspondence with Rodney Tiffen Emeritus Professor, Government and International Relations, the University of Sydney, 12 January 2011.
¹⁰⁷ De Burgh, H. *Investigative Journalism*, p. 16.
journalist who condemned atrocities by 'his own side' in Kosovo through his reporting. The investigative journalist in this situation was appealing to a moral standard more fundamental than the Authority's exercise of xenophobia. The moral standard may be more fittingly applied to the international community, which widely condemned the civil war in Kosovo. In this example, the investigative journalist is working in the public interest in a very general sense, and appealing to a moral orthodoxy beyond the state.

In this example, de Burgh argued that investigative journalists were also motivated by their own sense of morality, and desire for change. He stated: 'The fact that much investigative journalism ends with legislation or regulation being promised or designed is not therefore an accident.' Investigative journalism often provide the public with the first draft of legislation by drawing attention to 'the failures within society's system of regulation and to the ways in which those systems can be circumvented by the rich, the powerful and the corrupt'.

Ettema and Glasser argue that investigative journalists often rely on reporting conventions of storytelling to appeal to this moral norm. They argued investigative journalists should not attempt to appeal to a sense of objectivity over morality, as all information selected for inclusion in a story contains value judgments. Rather, they argued that the tools of the investigative journalist should be used to serve as an exercise in public conscience:

The work of these reporters calls us, as a society, to decide what is, and what is not, an outrage to our sense of moral order and to consider our expectations for our officials, our institutions and ultimately ourselves. In this way investigative journalists are custodians of public conscience.

Consistent with these arguments about what constitutes investigative journalism, James L Aucoin identified five key elements that may or may not be present in an investigative story:

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108 Ibid.
109 Ibid., p. 21.
110 Ibid., p. 16.
111 Ibid., p. 3.
it exposes information; it is about an important public issue; someone or some organisation does not want the information reported; the issue is made public through time, research and original reporting; and, it is written with a purpose to inspire reform.\textsuperscript{114}

Another characteristic of investigative journalism is that it differs from news reporting because of its scrutiny of ostensible facts, a tacit quality that may not be evident in the reading of the story. A British investigative journalist, Jonathon Calvert, expressed it best: 'Some stories you make five calls on, some twenty. When you are making a hundred, that's investigative journalism'.\textsuperscript{115}

\textbf{A New Typology of Investigative Journalism}

Table 2.1 considers the categorical definitions of de Burgh and Tiffen, and definitional points discussed so far. The far right column is a new construct that has modified existing categories of investigative journalism in an effort to succinctly list and differentiate between different types of investigative stories in the modern era.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{114} Aucoin, J. l., \textit{The Evolution of American Investigative Reporting}, p. 91.
\item \textsuperscript{115} De Burgh, H. \textit{Investigative Journalism}, p. 18.
\end{itemize}
Table 2.1: Revised Categories Defining Investigative Journalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tiffen</th>
<th>De Burgh</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>New Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigation of neglected issues — where the powerless are given a voice</td>
<td>Identify shameful, even illegal, practices that transgress the moral code</td>
<td>Incorporate 'moral standard' into Tiffen's definition to include de Burgh's point that investigative journalism operates within a moral standard</td>
<td>Investigations of neglected issues — where the powerless are given a voice and a moral standard is implied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision of major events (such as an unsolved crime)</td>
<td>Challenge an official account; question the factual bases upon which significant assertions are made</td>
<td>Event need not be major, to be considered significant, especially when viewed retrospectively; include 'official' to show that the revision is a challenge to the normative view.</td>
<td>An investigation that revises the official account of significant events in a way that is revelatory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathering new information by disclosing a secret wrongdoing.</td>
<td>Disclose a cover-up; exposes gaps between profession and practice; show justice has been corrupted; reveal abuse of power; demonstrate loopholes in the law</td>
<td>Include 'public interest' to address Rusbridger's point about the difference between investigative and exposure journalism.</td>
<td>An investigation that gathers new information by disclosing a secret wrongdoing, and that information is in the public interest and can be verified, or has had a serious attempt at verification.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author; De Burgh, H. Investigative Journalism, pp. 15-18; Tiffen, R. Scandals, Media, Politics & Corruption in Contemporary Australia, p. 33.

It can be seen here, that the category modifications combine Tiffen and de Burgh's indicators. The categories are intended to be mutually exclusive, so that there is no overlap, which is necessary for operational definition purposes for the research that will follow (see Chapter Four).

But for the moment, it is time to return to the background of the original problem of why investigative print journalism is considered to be under threat in Australia.

SECTION II

The Decline of Key Australian Newspapers

A MEAA snapshot of the Australian newspaper market, using a variety of different measures, revealed troubling economic times for the foreseeable future for metropolitan daily
newspaper businesses.\textsuperscript{116} Key measures used included tracking overall and advertising revenues, number of full-time employed editorial staff, company share price, annual newspaper sales figures, and reader demographics. On the last point, information about readers included: what percentage still read the newspaper each day, with what other media they engage, and how they might access newspapers (free online or paid print copy). With reference to some of these measurements of newspaper performance, the next section independently assesses Australian newspapers' outlooks (financial and others) to provide context to consider newspapers' prospective commitment to costly journalism, such as investigative journalism.

\textit{Stock Price}

Australia's two largest newspaper companies, Fairfax Media (FXJ) and News Limited (NWS) owned more than 90 per cent of Australia's metropolitan daily newspapers in 2012. Notwithstanding that the stock market is subject to rise and falls, the ten-year snapshot of both companies' stock between 2000 and 2010 show that compared to the top 200 Australian publically listed companies known as the S&P/ASX 200 (XJO),\textsuperscript{117} which trended upwards, these newspaper media stocks fell. Fairfax's ten-year high was $A4.80 during a peak in the market in late 2007, but by late 2010 it was trading at about $A1.45 — a 70 per cent fall.\textsuperscript{118} Two years beyond this, in 2012, it was a mere 0.46 cents.\textsuperscript{119}Compare this to Fairfax's share price of $6.24 in March 2000.

News Corporation (News Corp), which fully owns the subsidiary News Limited, is a global mass media company and vastly more diversified than the Australian-owned, Fairfax. A third of News Corp's revenues come from advertising, which expose it to the boom and recession cycles because of the high correlation between these cycles and advertising spending. It is

\begin{flushleft}

\textsuperscript{117} The S&P/ASX 200 is recognized as the primary investable benchmark in Australia. The index covers approximately 78\% of Australian equity market capitalisation.


\end{flushleft}
exposed to the vicissitudes of the NASDAQ\textsuperscript{120} stock market, which has experienced greater falls than the Australian stock exchange during the GFC. Until 2012, News Corporation's newspapers had been subsidised by profitable entertainment holdings in film and television, but this will change in 2013, as discussed in a moment. Its securities experienced a ten-year high of $A40 in 2001 compared to $A15.7 in late 2010 — a 61 per cent fall.\textsuperscript{121} Two years later in 2012, it had rebounded to $A23.53, unlike Fairfax which continued to fall.\textsuperscript{122}

However, these News Corp figures need to be understood in the context that in late 2004 News Corporation changed its country of incorporation from Australia to the US with a new primary listing on the NASDAQ, although it retained a secondary listing in Australia.\textsuperscript{123} Then, in 2012 it announced plans to separate its lucrative entertainment assets such as Twentieth Century Fox Film and others, from its publishing arm, including its underperforming and tainted British mastheads, following the phone hacking scandal that saw the closure of its \textit{News of the World}. Its profitable Australian newspapers, which produce 11 million print copies a week,\textsuperscript{124} would be bundled into the new publishing group.\textsuperscript{125} This move would be completed towards the end of 2013. It would not be unexpected for this move to adversely affect the share price when the entertainment businesses are no longer subsidising the publishing arm of the global business.

As noted, the GFC exacerbated stock exchange share price falls (see Figures 2.2 and 2.3). At the time, both Australian newspaper companies hit an historic floor in early 2009. Fairfax fell below $A1 and News fell below $A11.\textsuperscript{126} In an interview with Goldman Sachs media analyst Christian Guerra said the Australian media share price collapse reflected the United

\textsuperscript{120} (NASDAQ) National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Australian Securities Exchange, 'News Corporation (NWS),' ASX, retrieved from iPhone App, accessed 28 November 2012.
States and European experiences for newspaper companies. Celebrated mastheads such as the New York Times were forced to sell its headquarters to survive, and the Chicago Tribune, entered bankruptcy protection after ad revenues failed to match interest repayments. Certainly, overseas companies' stock fell more sharply than Australian securities. This may account for the fact that Australia weathered the GFC better than most developed nations, and was not technically in recession. Emily Bell, the UK Guardian's digital media director, said at the time that the global fall in newspaper share price would be no short-term trend: 'This is systematic collapse — not just a cyclical downturn.' Evidence to follow, suggests she was right.

Figure 2.2 Fairfax Media, FXJ, Share Price Over a Decade (red line) Compared to the ASX200 Index, XJO, (blue line)

Source: Analysis of data supplied by Australian Securities Exchange

127 Guerra C. 'Interview with the author,' 12 November 2010.
Advertising Revenues: A Comparative Analysis, Australia and USA

Advertising revenues provide another useful measure of the health of newspaper businesses. Below, Figure 2.4 shows a comparison of how United States' advertising revenue has performed since 1990 relative to its GDP. Print advertising tracked higher than United States GDP from 1980 to 1990, but shortly after 2000 fell sharply below GDP and has not recovered (blue line).

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Australian newspaper advertising revenue growth has followed a similar pattern to the United States, as seen in Figure 2.5. The blue line representing the Australian newspaper industry shows that since 1994 advertising revenue growth has stalled, taking three sharp dives — well below Australia's GDP — and, is again in a negative phase in 2012. Although, it should be noted that media companies were once an enviable sector that enjoyed very high revenues and profitably compared to their costs prior to the 1990s. The largest Australian dive was negative 20 per cent, and followed shortly after the last official United States recession in 2001-02. If this pattern were to continue, it is reasonable to expect that, owing to the GFC, Australian newspaper revenue growth in the current period could fall below 2001 levels. Slower revenue growth has implications for the political economy of newspapers, and how resources are spread within the newspaper. It is contended here that falling revenues negatively impact on newspaper organisations commitment to expensive, time-consuming journalism, such as investigative journalism.
Figure 2.5: Australian Newspaper Advertising Revenue Growth Compared to GDP, 1980-2008.

Source: MEAA. 'The Future of Journalism,’ p. 7 (reprinted with permission)

Advertising Revenues in Australia

Within the domestic Australian newspaper market, current research from economists and media industry specialists show that, on all measures, the newspaper sector has not grown at the rate of other media. Advertising is leaving newspapers and migrating to online to capitalise on the digital economy. This includes pay TV and m-commerce — advertising on mobile phones.

Defying market expectations after the GFC, online advertisement expenditure in Australia grew 18.5 per cent in 2009. It included search and display ads, banner and pop-up ads and classifieds. In the same period, metropolitan newspapers advertising revenues fell 9.8 per cent. Compared to the financial year before, in 2007-08, metropolitan newspapers'

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134 Ibid.
advertisement revenue fell just half a percent.\textsuperscript{135} As online advertising revenue increased, newspaper advertising revenue decreased.

A broader view of the Australian media's advertising revenue share is shown in Figure 2.6. It demonstrates that the GFC adversely impacted on the media sector, with the standout exceptions of online and pay TV — these two experienced growth. Newspapers and magazines were hardest hit.

Figure 2.6: Change in Australian Ad Revenue by Sector, 2007-2010

![Figure 2.6: Change in Australian Ad Revenue by Sector, 2007-2010](image)


Online advertising market forecasts were very positive, and contrasted sharply with newspaper advertising revenue forecasts. The Interactive Advertising Bureau (iab)\textsuperscript{136} stated that online advertising in Australia was in the growth phase of its cycle.\textsuperscript{137} It predicted that the online ad market would make $3.5 to $3.75 billion by 2014 (up from $2 billion in 2010). The majority of that revenue would come from search and directories advertising (51 per cent), a smaller, but still substantial share from online display advertising (33 per cent).\textsuperscript{138} To put this

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., p. 6.
\textsuperscript{136} Iab was founded by Fairfax Digital, Google, News Digital Media, Ninemsn, Sensis, Yahoo!7 and the Australian Interactive Media Association. It is a consortium of 40 online advertising, marketing, technology and services companies.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., p. 2.
in context, accounting firm PriceWaterhouseCoopers estimated in 2010 that the total Australian advertising revenue was worth about $12 billion, and newspapers' share of that was largest, about $4 billion (see Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7. Share of Advertising Revenue in Australia by Sector, 2007-2011

Nonetheless, print newspapers' share, as a percentage of the total advertising market, is falling — it had shrunk from 35 per cent to 30 per cent in five years, as Table 2.2 shows. The implications of this are that smaller revenues may limit newspapers' ability to pay for expensive investigative journalism.

Table 2.2: Newspapers' Loss of Advertising, 2006-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>2006(%)</th>
<th>2011(%)</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Filmed entertainment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free-to-air TV</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscription TV</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-home</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author, analysis of data supplied by Paul Budde, pp. 6-7.*
This is not to state that online advertising did not face its own unique difficulties, including slow broadband speeds, click fraud (false reporting of website visits), and the absence of a standardised measuring system, which makes it difficult to compare the impact of online advertising campaigns.\textsuperscript{139} However, these problems are surmountable, and, as Australia is developing a national broadband network (NBN), band speed is unlikely to be a future issue. Further, the introduction of the NBN is expected to converge audio and visual advertising. Thus, TV and Internet advertising is expected to meld into one, which is expected to exacerbate economic hardship for free-to-air (FTA) television.\textsuperscript{140} FTA television has lost viewers in recent years due to pay television (Foxtel), time shifting of programs; Internet downloads and purchased DVDs of favourite series.\textsuperscript{141}

A further advantage for online advertising is that, unlike hard copy newspaper stories, every story online can be measured by how many unique users view it, and advertisers are attracted to this technology to target their ads to a very specific audience, and update daily if necessary. Publishers, or digital marketers, as they are now called in the online sphere, can charge a significant premium for this service.\textsuperscript{142} However, there are still some technical difficulties with generating different ads targeting specific viewers, and amassing information about viewers to accurately target the advertising.\textsuperscript{143}

Of course, newspaper publishers can take advantage of these technologies too, by publishing their stories online, tracking their appeal and selling online advertising to match their readership. The difficulty for newspapers is that online advertising undercuts its traditional hardcopy advertising revenues, and has driven down advertising unit prices in the past decade.\textsuperscript{144}

Nonetheless, Australian newspaper businesses have identified that they need to adapt and 'colonise the web' with their own online presence. Since 1998, they have developed

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., p. 2.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{141} Carson, A. 'Debt deal saves Channel Nine — For Now,' \textit{The Conversation}, 18 October 2012.
\textsuperscript{142} Kohler, A. 'Interview with the author,' 5 October 2010.
\textsuperscript{143} Budde, P. \textit{Australia - Digital Economy - Advertising, Statistics, Revenues and Forecasts}, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{144} Guerra, C. 'Interview with the author,' 12 November 2010.
successful newspaper websites that are popular and regularly updated with breaking news. Both News Limited and Fairfax Media's major newspaper websites rank in Australia's top 10 popular news sites.\textsuperscript{145} Both companies have diversified and bought or created online classified websites, and other popular websites to attract advertising, such as dating and social networking sites. These are cross-promoted in their print mastheads. Together, these decisions have enabled Australia's two biggest newspaper companies to colonise the web to a greater degree than many of their overseas newspaper counterparts.\textsuperscript{146}

Yet, these online successes do not overcome the challenges facing print newspapers of Australia's largest media companies. Specialist publically listed online advertising competitors pose a significant threat, gaining majority market share of specific spend areas (vehicle sales, real estate sales) formerly contributing to vast advertising revenue to newspapers. These websites include carsales.com.au, realestate.com.au and seek.com.au. They had an aggregate of more than 10 million unique browsers a month in 2010, and each is listed in the top 300 Australian companies on the stock exchange.\textsuperscript{147}

Further, the newspaper company websites, whilst they are popular news sites, struggle to make the top 10 most popular Australian general websites. In mid-2009, the most popular sites overall were Google, with about 12.5 million unique viewers per month, followed by Ninemsn, Microsoft, Facebook, Yahoo!7, YouTube, eBay and News Digital Media (News Limited's digital arm that manages www.news.com.au) coming in eighth, just ahead of Telstra BigPond and Wikipedia.\textsuperscript{148} By 2012, Ninemsn had slipped to third place, surpassed by Facebook, and together with Yahoo!7 (in sixth position) they were the only news sites in the top 10. The most visited website in Australia continues to be Google with 13.7 million unique viewers in a month.\textsuperscript{149}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Ibib., p. 7.
  \item Young, S. 'The Journalism "Crisis",' in \textit{Journalism Studies}, vol. 11, no. 4, 2010, p. 620.
\end{itemize}
Sector analysts consistently identify the growth areas in online advertising not as classified or display ads but, rather the search and directories market; mobile phone advertising; and online video advertising. Further, it has proved difficult for newcomers to break into these advertising areas to compete with Google, which has a 90 per cent share of online search-related spending in Australia.\(^{151}\)

The relationship between news organisations and content aggregators, such as Google, is an uncomfortable, but increasingly necessary, one. News organisations have protested loudly over the flight of advertising to the Internet to search indexes that use their content as a lure. Rupert Murdoch has called it 'stealing' in an interview with Sky News Australia.\(^{152}\) Sites, such as Google, index news content, without permission, to attract huge volumes of viewers and advertisers to its site.\(^{153}\) But news media are also becoming dependent on aggregators (such as Google) and social networks (such as Facebook) to bring them a substantial portion of their audience.\(^{154}\) The 2011 United States' Pew Research Centre's *State of the News Media* report found that as news consumption became more mobile, news organisations are increasingly subjected to the rules of device makers, such as Apple, and software developers (Google) to deliver their content. It concluded: 'In the 20th century, the news media thrived by being the intermediary others needed to reach customers. In the 21st [century], increasingly there is a new intermediary: Software programmers, content aggregators and device makers.'\(^{155}\)

In efforts to catch up on lost advertising revenues, Australia's two major newspaper companies are experimenting with different strategies to further infiltrate the online advertising market. News invested heavily in its acquisition of social networking site MySpace, for which it paid a premium, to include a job classifieds site powered by its CareerOne site.\(^{156}\) Meanwhile, Fairfax's online division Fairfax Digital sought to challenge television for the online video advertising market. It launched FDTV to provide TV-quality

\(^{150}\) Frost & Sullivan, Paul Budde, PricewaterhouseCoopers and Nielson.


\(^{152}\) Speers, D. 'Interview with Rupert Murdoch,' *Sky News Australia*, 7 November 2009.


\(^{155}\) Ibid.

\(^{156}\) Budde, P. *Australia - Digital Economy - Advertising, Statistics, Revenues and Forecasts*, p. 5.
online advertisements that autoplay within its online stories. Fairfax's Head of video Ricky Sutton said at the time, 'We expect to see video streams double and advertising revenue to rise more than 50 per cent a year for the next few years ... web video will be the fastest growing advertising segment.'

However, within two years Fairfax abandoned the autoplay after advertisers stopped buying the advertising space because it was slowing viewers' Internet speed and 'having a negative impact on brands being advertised'. News also misjudged consumers, by buying MySpace after it had reached its peak audience. The site lost money and News Corp sold the website to an ad firm owned by popstar Justin Timberlake, called Specific Media, for US$35 million. News Corp had suffered a US$545 million loss on its acquisition price of US$580 million. Both these examples demonstrate that the major print media companies in Australia have struggled to identify the future revenue sources to subsidise their journalism; the role print advertising has played to date.

As mentioned, another advertising revenue form that has experienced growth is mobile advertising or m-commerce. It is very popular overseas in advanced telecommunications markets, but Australia has lagged behind international benchmarks and is therefore identified as having enormous potential for growth in this area. If media companies succeed in regaining audiences through these technologies — and attract advertisers or subscribers to increase their revenues — the future of how to pay for costly journalism, such as investigative journalism, might be eased. But again, newspapers businesses no longer have a monopoly on providing news or attracting advertising as they did in the past.

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160 Ibid., p. 3.
Online and Younger Generations

Unsurprisingly, online media growth is driven by younger generations. The medium's most engaged demographic is Generation Y and the cusp of the younger Generation X, the 16-34 year olds. To generalise, this is a generation that does not buy newspapers. According to media analyst Paul Budde, in his 2010 report, he stated 98.5 per cent of Australians used the Internet regularly, up to six hours per day, and about the same percentage owned a mobile phone. Almost 90 per cent of Generation Ys own a computer, and 81 per cent own a digital media player such as an MP3. The culture of this generation is to choose how and when to consume information. The power is no longer just in the hands of multi-million dollar media companies, but also in the hands of consumers. This reversal has seen a bypassing of traditional gatekeepers and mediators, not just with the rise of citizen journalism, but also across other sectors such as music, book publishing, and online retail. Generation Y is discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

Australian Newspaper Sales — Circulation

As with advertising revenues, an analysis of the circulation data of Australia's daily newspapers over the past two decades shows a long-term downward trend. The consequences of this for investigative journalism are problematic, as not only has the capacity for expensive journalism been potentially reduced due to revenue declines, the print audience share is getting smaller. A shrinking paying readership puts pressure on editors to prioritise popular, often easy-to-digest stories to appeal to as broad an audience as possible to attract advertisers. This is why the online version of even the most serious broadsheet Australian newspapers is promoting stories about pop starlets with paparazzi-styled photographs. A scan of the top five most popular stories of the day in 2012, which appears at the bottom of most Australian newspaper sites, usually lists stories about celebrity, sex, crime, or all three.

Falling print circulation of Australian newspapers is consistent with other developed economies such as Britain, Canada, New Zealand, although there are some exceptions.\textsuperscript{164} Australian figures show that paid circulation fell from 323 per 1000 population to 166 between 1980 and 2007. This was the steepest decline of countries surveyed.\textsuperscript{165} \textit{The Age}, \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} and \textit{The Australian},\textsuperscript{166} each suffered five figure losses of paying readers between 1992 and 2008, as can be seen in Figure 2.8.

\textbf{Figure 2.8: Circulation Losses in Paid Subscriptions, 1992-2010}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.7\textwidth]{circulation_losses.png}
\caption{Circulation Losses in Paid Subscriptions, 1992-2010}
\end{figure}

\textit{Source: Author, analysis of data from Tiffen, R. 'Trends in Newspaper Circulation and Ownership,' p. 4}

When these figures are broken down to show circulation movement in four-year periods over 24 years, a more complex picture emerged, one of periods of growth and decline, as can be seen in Figure 2.9. The long-term hardcopy circulation trend was downward since 1992 for News Corporation's \textit{The Australian}, but even earlier for Fairfax daily broadsheets.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{164} Out of 18 surveyed nations, newspaper circulation has only increased in Japan, Norway, the Netherlands and Ireland between 1980 and 2007.
\item \textsuperscript{165} Tiffen, R. 'Trends in Newspaper Circulation and Ownership,' p 1.
\item \textsuperscript{166} It should be noted that \textit{The Australian} suffered its biggest loss of paid readers between 1992-1996, since this time it has added 10,917 to its circulation.
\end{itemize}
Australian Daily Metropolitan Newspaper Revenues

As can be expected with falling advertising share and falling circulations, total newspaper revenues have also shifted in developed economies. According to an OECD report on the global newspaper market, print advertising revenue as a share of the total advertising market, fell steadily over the past decade.\(^{167}\)

Furthermore, during the GFC, most developed nations experienced overall negative growth in their paid-for daily newspaper markets.\(^{168}\) The 2010 report found that in developed economies, the newspaper publishing market made 57 per cent of its revenues from advertising (this is higher in Australia), with online advertising comprising just 4 percent of total newspaper revenues.\(^{169}\) Australia, which was better protected from the GFC than most developed economies, experienced three per cent negative growth during this period in its metro daily newspaper markets. However, almost 70 per cent of the revenue of Fairfax Media comes from its publishing operations, and the majority of this revenue was advertising — a revenue base that is shrinking.\(^{170}\) The company wrote during the GFC that its loss of $380

\(^{168}\) In Australia the data also includes periodicals.
million after tax in 2009 was due to: 'the speed of the economic slowdown, especially in the second half; cuts to discretionary advertising [and] responding to the online challenges'.

News Corporation, a much more diversified company than Fairfax, faced similar pressures with its Australian newspapers. Its annual report stated that Australian newspaper revenues decreased 24 per cent in 2009. It cited two reasons, the 'unfavorable foreign exchange fluctuation and lower classified and display advertising revenues'. In subsequent years, this downward trend has continued.

More generally, the OECD report concluded that non-editorial costs of newspapers such as administration, maintenance, promotion and advertising, production and distribution were very high as a proportion of overall expenditure. These costs made newspapers vulnerable to economic downturns and less agile in reacting to challenges from the online news environment. It concluded that, 'after very profitable years, newspaper publishers in most OECD countries face declining advertising revenues and significant reductions in titles and circulation. The economic crisis has amplified this downward development.'

The report also noted that because less developed nations, such as India, were experiencing growth in their newspaper markets, the number of titles worldwide had actually increased in the past decade, thus the case for the 'death of the newspaper' could not be successfully argued at a global level.

Figure 2.10 shows newspaper market declines in OECD member countries from 2007 to 2009.

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171 Ibid., p. 4.
173 Guerra, C. 'Interview with the author,' 12 November 2010.
175 Ibid.
As can be seen in Figure 2.10 Australian newspaper companies fell three percent during the GFC, and were among the least affected of the OECD nations. Globally, the growth of the newspaper market has continued to slow since 2004, and was almost zero by 2007. Since 2007 the growth has been negative for most developed states.\textsuperscript{176}

**The Internet as a Source of News**

Losing advertising to the online sphere is not the only challenge to print newspapers and their provision of investigative journalism. They have also lost audience share to online media. In the OECD, Korea was the standout example with 77 per cent of its population preferring to read newspapers online. This would not be problematic for funding journalism if the online content was adequately supporting it. But as most news is read and viewed for free online, print newspapers were suffering diminished revenues, and such revenues would assist the subsidisation of investigative journalism.

\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., p. 7.
For most OECD states, about half of their populations in 2010 were reading newspapers online.\textsuperscript{177} As the primary source of news, newspapers lost a larger share of audience to online compared to traditional media like TV. And yet, reading and viewing news was not the most popular Internet activity. As a conservative estimate, logging on to the Internet for the purpose of sourcing news accounted for just five per cent of Internet visits in OECD countries, the report found.\textsuperscript{178}

Excluding Korea, reading news online is not mutually exclusive to using other traditional news sources. Most readers used a mix of mediums to get their daily information. In the OECD, the most active online news audience was aged 25-34. Younger readers, 16-24 years had not developed the print newspaper habit, the report found, but instead preferred the Internet as their primary source of obtaining news. Moreover, they preferred using search engines to find news websites — reinforcing news media's growing dependence on news indexing sites, such as Google, to attract audiences. British research questioned whether this age bracket merely scan information, as opposed to reading and comprehending it.\textsuperscript{179}

Studies have shown that the time spent consuming news on the Internet tended to be more sporadic and ad hoc than traditional print newspaper readership. This raises a question about how investigative journalism, which tends to involve longer stories, and requires more of the reader's attention, is received in the online sphere. The OECD report found news consumption was 'radically different' online compared to hardcopy print.\textsuperscript{180} Online readers were empowered to mix and match information and news sources and to participate by compiling their own personalised information through blogs and social media sites such as Facebook. How the various actors in the online environment contribute to the public sphere through citizen engagement and democratic participation is an ongoing question of interest, and obviously one that has implications for both the reception and production of investigative journalism in the future.

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., p. 9.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid.
Responding to Online News Growth

Australian newspapers adjusted to the new media environment in multitudinous ways. News established a new division of News Limited, News Digital Media, to operate its classified and search engine websites such as CareerOne and TrueLocal. TrueLocal's percentage audience share is modest, a single digit figure, yet it was the second most popular local search website used by Australians behind the monolithic Google in 2010. Likewise, Fairfax Media established separate classified advertising websites including MyCareer and dating website RSVP. The revenues from these online sites are not sufficient to maintain Australia's two major print companies' vast operational costs. The companies have recognised that news must deliver higher returns online.¹⁸¹

Both companies, like their overseas counterparts, desire online audiences to pay for content. Fairfax and News Limited favour technologies such as applications (apps) accessible through tablets such as the Apple iPad, and smart phones to deliver news and content, for a price. In August 2009, Rupert Murdoch announced online news would be put behind a paywall. His experimentation began with the 225-year old London Times charging subscriptions to access more than the first paragraph of its stories digitally. Fairfax has considered this option in 2012, and announced it would erect a metered paywall by March 2013 for The Age and SMH. Its niche business newspaper, the Australian Financial Review, was the first to charge subscriptions for online content in 2006 through its paywall, and has also developed apps for the iPad, various e-readers and smart phones. However, it had one of the most expensive paywalls in the world and so in November 2011 the AFR cut the price by a third to reset the online price below the hardcopy price, after years of struggling to attract subscribers. According to Fairfax's annual report of 2011/2012 it had 20,000 paid online subscribers, (but this figure included bundled newspaper subscriptions).¹⁸²

Rupert Murdoch perhaps best underscored the technological challenges for news media when he said in a company annual report that media companies that do not innovate would struggle to survive: 'They will be digitally disoriented, quickly losing touch with their customers, who

¹⁸¹ Guerra, C. 'Interview with the author,' 12 November 2010.
¹⁸² Fairfax Media, 2012 Full Year Results Investor Briefing, p. 15.
will be more technologically literate than those who seek to provide them with services and products.\footnote{183} Herein lies the key challenge for commercial media organisations: they are expecting a generation that has never paid for news online to begin paying for it. No news organisation, anywhere, has fully solved the conundrum of how to do this, yet. Another conundrum is that much of this information is already available, free to access, from public broadcasters, which owing to government funding (at current levels) have the resources and journalists to deliver quality information using a variety of media, including online, podcasts, vodcasts, television, radio, through social networking sites and blogs, and most recently, through mobile and hand held devices such as smart phones and tablets.

Unsurprisingly, commercial news providers in Australia, especially print, have clashed with the government-sponsored ABC over its expanding media frontier, because the ABC is likely to continue to provide rival services for free if federal budget allocations support it. After all, no one owns the news, and this makes the task of online commodification difficult. ABC's general manager, Mark Scott, said it was folly to charge for generic news stories: 'To lock up content will be to dry up traffic'.\footnote{184} He observed that organisations like the ABC, that would continue to provide free content, had become the enemy of commercial providers. Scott rejected criticism that the ABC had expanded beyond its charter by establishing a 24-hour TV station in 2010, which rivals commercially operated Sky News — of which Rupert Murdoch owns a substantial share. He said the ABC would stand up 'to critics who, in the face of their own competitive pressure, will turn against the public broadcaster. Attacking our content, our funding, our right to exist'.\footnote{185}

The war of words between government-sponsored and commercial media extended beyond Australian shores. Rupert Murdoch's son James, then CEO of British pay TV Channel BSkyB, said of the free-to-air BBC in 2009 that its £9 billion cheque from the British government was anti-democratic; a threat to pluralism. In an astonishing argument where he attacked free-of-charge information for undermining democracy, James Murdoch said: 'The expansion of state-sponsored journalism is a threat to the plurality and independence of news provision, which are so important for our democracy'. He argued that, 'dumping free, state-

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\textsuperscript{183} Murdoch, R. \textit{Annual Report 2010}, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{184} Scott, M. 'A. N. Smith Memorial Lecture in Journalism,' (speech), Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 14 October 2009.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
sponsored news on the market makes it incredibly difficult for journalism to flourish on the Internet'.

**Print Journalism Cost Cutting**

The consequences of old media empires' lost advertising revenues has triggered cost cutting. This includes reducing full-time editorial staff and, in some cases, limiting more expensive journalism, included closing foreign bureaus, and cutting back investigative journalism.187 There are no official Australian figures for print journalism job losses over the decades; however, the MEAA estimated the number of full-time Australian journalists had fallen 13 per cent from 2001 to 2009, down to 7500 positions. Since then, in 2012 News Limited and Fairfax and Channel 10 announced a further 3000 job losses, in total for that year.188

In developed economies, during the GFC, journalism job losses in the print sector were widespread.189 Soaring debt levels coupled with falling property prices, diminished revenues and bottomed out share prices. This resulted in more than 200 mastheads closing in the United States, and significant cost cutting at surviving mastheads.190 Unofficial United States print job loss figures kept by website *Paper Cuts*, since the GFC, recorded 14,861 editorial redundancies in 2009.191

To understand the state of the Australian media within a broader international context, the OECD report concluded 2009 was the worst year on record for journalism job losses in most developed nations. It found print editorial job cuts had risen sharply since 1997.192 Before the 1990s, the report identified that the number of reporting jobs in the global newspaper industry

were growing, doubling in the last half of the last century. But since the late 1990s, employment in print media fell, which intensified during the GFC. The OECD identified significant job losses in Germany (-25 per cent), Korea (-30 per cent), Scandinavia (-30 per cent), the United States (-12 per cent), Netherlands (-41 per cent) and Japan (-18 per cent).\footnote{Ibid., p. 21.}

**Audience Research**

With cuts to staff, circulations and print mastheads, how have audiences adapted to the shifting news media environment, and what does this mean for investigative journalism? A 2008 MEAA commissioned study to investigate Australian public attitudes to the media and how Australians use news media, discovered that quality newspapers were 'valued', but use of the Internet as a primary news source was increasing.\footnote{Essential Research, *MEAA: Research on the Future of Journalism*, unpublished, Sydney: Essential Research, 2008, p. 3.} This was consistent with OECD findings. Interestingly, Australians rarely sought general news from specific online-only sites, such as blogs or media companies like *Crikey.com.au*. Overwhelmingly Australians used the Internet to access search engines and social networking sites, not online news. In Australia, 6.8 per cent of all online visits were to news sites, higher than the OECD average of 5 per cent.\footnote{MEAA, *Life in the Clickstream: The Future of Journalism*, p. 11; Wunsch-Vincent, S. et al, 'Evolution of News and the Internet,' p. 9.}

The MEAA survey\footnote{N = 1200, using ABS survey methodology} found that compared to 2003, fewer people relied on print newspapers (-6% change) as their main source of news, and more were using the Internet (13% change). Television news audiences fell (-8% change), but radio increased (3% change). More than half of respondents (59%) agreed with the statement that they did not pick up a newspaper regularly but still kept in touch with the news through TV or radio. Just over half (51%) preferred reading news in print than on a screen.\footnote{Essential Research, *MEAA: Research on the Future of Journalism*, p. 3.} Notwithstanding, commercial TV remained the dominant source of news; and metropolitan and daily newspapers ranked second. For the first time, online news was favoured above radio as a primary source of news. When it came to sourcing breaking news stories, online came in second behind TV and ahead

\footnote{Ibid., p. 21.}


\footnote{N = 1200, using ABS survey methodology}

\footnote{Essential Research, *MEAA: Research on the Future of Journalism*, p. 3.}

\footnote{Ibid., p. 21.}
of radio.\textsuperscript{199} The survey found online was perceived as a powerful tool that complemented traditional media. When a story was of particular interest, Australians would visit news sites, blogs and social networking sites seeking more information.\textsuperscript{200}

The survey found a general perception that news 'quality' was decreasing, while audience concerns about journalism standards, and bias in stories, was increasing. Fairfax readers were particularly critical of a perceived fall in journalism standards, and strongly agreed that the media should act as a 'watchdog'. The finding emphasises the role the print media can and has played in holding those with power to account in a democracy. These readers were more inclined to read newspapers 'because of quality journalism', and believed that the online sphere could not replace quality journalism. They were especially concerned about the rise in celebrity gossip stories in newspapers and online.\textsuperscript{201}

About half the respondents anticipated that the time would come when newspapers were no longer available in print. Those aged under 34 expressed this view most strongly.\textsuperscript{202} The question here is, if print newspapers do move fully online, and fail to find a funding model to replicate the revenues of the past because advertising is so fragmented in the online sphere, can broadsheets still fund investigative journalism? If the answer is no, then what are the alternatives for Australian media fulfilling a watchdog role beyond the public broadcasters? Which Australian medium can fund investigative journalism in the public interest to provide transparency and hold those with power to account — vital to a well-functioning democracy?

Conclusion

Print journalism is at a crossroads. Its future depends on finding a new economic model to support it because, in the digital era, where information is largely free, the print business model has fractured. Expensive journalism, such as investigative journalism, is under threat because editorial print staff and resources are being cut. Advertising revenues are no longer

\textsuperscript{199} Ibid., p. 30.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., p. 22.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., p. 27.
\textsuperscript{202} Ibid., p. 29.
'rivers of gold' for print newspaper businesses and economic barriers to publish and report news have largely disappeared.

Australia's golden economic era for newspapers was from the late 1970s to the early 1980s when circulations peaked, advertising revenues flowed, profits were high, and there were more daily mastheads than in 2013. This was the era when investigative journalism was said to have experienced its 'second wave'. Since then, newspaper ownership in Australia has continued to become more concentrated, and is higher than that in any other developed nation.

Analysing and applying various measurements such as company stock price, print circulation, advertising revenues, and audience research has shown that Australian print newspapers are in a cycle of decline. On all counts, Australian newspapers performed worse than a decade ago, this decline sharpened during the 2008-09 GFC. There are no indications that this downturn will reverse, unless a feasible alternative funding model is established. It has not yet been demonstrated that paywalls and Apps can restore newspaper company revenues. Meanwhile, advertising continues to migrate online and away from traditional media, and together with mobile advertising, it has experienced strong growth, including during the GFC.

Australians' adoption of new technologies is high, and the use of the Internet as a primary news source is increasing. Younger generations, those under 34, have adapted quickly. This generation has not engaged in buying print newspapers, and their expectation is for free online news. Yet, despite this gloomy print media outlook, Australians, when surveyed, appreciated that 'quality' journalism was more likely to come from newspapers, particularly broadsheets, and nominated newspaper journalists specifically with the 'watchdog' role of the media.

Newspaper businesses have recognised and attempted to adapt to the changing online environment, but have yet to launch a lucrative model to underwrite journalism in the digital era. Their embrace of the latest technological delivery services, such as tablets and mobile phone apps, have not yet delivered sufficient revenues to provide a complete solution to the
great print journalism economic conundrum. This conundrum also fuels the commercial media's hostility toward government-sponsored journalism such as provided by the ABC. It is considered a rival because — notwithstanding it is paid for through taxpayer funds — the ABC is perceived as a provider of free quality news. This 'free' news might undermine commercial competitors' success at charging for news content online. However, free news is not undesirable, as it adds information to the public sphere for all to access.

Importantly, the decline of Australian newspaper businesses has implications for print investigative journalism. This type of journalism is unlike other reporting genres: it is expensive, highly skilled and time consuming. While the line between news reporting and investigative journalism can be blurry, it essentially is using time and effort to, as de Burgh stated, 'pursue a truth that someone wants hidden' and which is in the public interest. Notwithstanding that scandalous behaviour and corruption can be exposed in the media through avenues other than investigative reporting, broadsheets newspapers have a history of delivering Australians 'quality' investigative journalism. The purpose of this thesis is to ascertain if this type of journalism is also following the slow, steady decline that for the moment characterises print newspapers in Australia.

\[203\] De Burgh, H. *Investigative Journalism*, p. 15.
CHAPTER THREE

Habermas to Twitter: Theories of the Public Sphere

Introduction

The key theoretical component of this thesis relates to the relationship between the mass media, the public sphere and democracy. More specifically, this thesis aims to explore the investigative reporting of selected Australian broadsheet newspapers in the public sphere, and how that reporting relates to Australian liberal democracy.

The review of the literature starts generally with the public sphere and discusses how this critical theory connects with other theories such as: nationalism; the political economy of the mass media; the Fourth Estate, and monitory democracy emerging from the digital media sphere. As the review progresses, it refines its focus to specifically examine contemporary debates about the viability of print newspapers and broadsheets' investigative journalism. This review identifies limitations in the scholarly analysis, and situates where this thesis can contribute to the literature about the relationship between broadsheet newspapers, investigative journalism, the public sphere and Australian democracy.

This review begins with Jürgen Habermas' public sphere theory, outlined in his seminal text *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Habermas provides a useful starting point for studying the interconnectedness of the mass media, journalism, public opinion and democracy.

Habermas' multidisciplinary approach towards modernity combines liberal, sociological and historical analyses and borrows (and rejects) arguments from political philosophers, including Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx and Thomas Hobbes. Hannah Arendt's analysis

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and critique of modernity, which gave rise to the notion of the social in the era of the mass media, also influenced Habermas. He also built on the critical theory of modern society of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School. Interestingly, they rejected Habermas' thesis as too left-wing. Habermas focused on Western bourgeois society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France, Britain and Germany to provide a narrative about how the public sphere developed, transformed and eventually imploded under the market imperatives that drive modern society. He delivered contestable conclusions about its current state.

While this author does not share Habermas' pessimistic view stated in his original thesis about the disintegration of the public sphere, his theory has durability because, as media scholar Michael Schudson identified, it has: 'been held up as a normative model of exemplary civic life'. Habermas provided a useful lens for analysing the contemporary media landscape and the tensions between traditional (freeze media, like newspapers — that capture a moment in time) and new media (flow media, like broadcast and digital — that regularly update news in actual time) and their contributions to the 'ideal' public sphere.

The Public Sphere — Jürgen Habermas

Habermas' text, published in German in 1962, was a postdoctoral thesis that defined the public sphere as the communal, communicative space in which, 'private people come together as a public'. In his critique, it was the society, rather than the individual, that was bourgeois and formed the public sphere. Habermas traces the rise of mercantilism in the eighteenth century, coinciding with the move away from irrational discourse — or absolute faith in God and divine rule — to the era of Enlightenment, where science and evidence-based knowledge were taking precedence in Western thinking.

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3 Ibid., p. 244.
5 Habermas worked under the supervision of Marburg's Wolfgang Abendroth, 'an openly and staunchly socialist professor', cited in Scannell, P. Media and Communication, p. 244.
6 Habermas, J. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, p. 27.
Habermas argued that capitalism required information. The emerging coffee houses in Britain, tea salons in France, and 'blossoming journals' of Germany, provided a public space for the bourgeoisie to exchange information. This spread to the United States of America, through pamphlets such as Thomas Paine's famous Common Sense. But the public sphere was more than information exchange; it was the transfer of ideas outside state control, to be a 'private domain carved off from public authority'. As such it was distinct from the private sphere. It was a reversal of ancient Greek thought, which also distinguished the private realm from the public; but for the ancient Greeks, freedom was found instead in the realm of public authority where it was enjoyed by the patriarchal head that dominated the private realm of the household. Rather, the private realm beyond the State was, for Habermas, one of freedom and was to be defended against the domination of the State.

In the Kantian (and later the Frankfurt School) traditions, Habermas honoured rational critical-debate. He subscribed to Kant's cosmopolitanism notions of universalism, natural rights and human dignity, which underscored the idea that reason could deliver freedom and justice. Habermas theorised that with the success of trade capitalism, 'the elements of a new social order were taking shape'. It was an optimistic time. Individuals were able to meet on equal footing because one's class was less important than the worth of one's argument, according to Habermas. Communication and criticism were central, and so newspapers were to provide an important role in communicating and providing political criticism to the emergent public sphere.

What developed then, was '… a forum in which the private people, came together to form a public, readied themselves to compel public authority to legitimate itself before public

8 Habermas, J. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, p. 36.
9 Ibid., p. 72.
10 Ibid., p. 25.
11 Calhoun, C. Habermas and the Public Sphere, p. 6.
12 Ibid., p. 7.
13 Calhoun, C. Habermas and the Public Sphere, p. 18.
15 Habermas, J. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, p. 14.
16 Calhoun, C. Habermas and the Public Sphere, p. 18.
opinion'.\textsuperscript{17} Social order, with the example that these gatherings at coffee houses and salons provided, 'embraced the wider strata of the middle class, including craftsmen and shopkeepers'.\textsuperscript{18} It included women in France, but not Britain (a point, among others, that exposed Habermas' theory to criticism from feminist critiques, such as that of Nancy Fraser,\textsuperscript{19} which will be discussed shortly).

At the same time as capitalism was thriving with traders travelling afar to visit interstate fairs, the need for information expanded also. Letters carried by merchants soon turned into a postal service,\textsuperscript{20} and in Europe, 'the great trade cities became at the same time centres for the traffic in news'.\textsuperscript{21} In the US, as in Europe, this led to the development of a press to the point that 'daily political journals appeared mid-seventeenth century...[and] news itself became a commodity'.\textsuperscript{22}

Not wanting to stray too far from the thesis, and into the minutiae of Habermas' theory, suffice to say that the key institutions that made the public sphere possible were the newspapers, but also the British coffee houses, French salons, scholarly German journals, and political pamphlets of the US. The newspapers and publications made possible of course by Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the Gutenberg press in 1440. This free public space had important political functions.

By 1834 a significant milestone in the development of public opinion was when the House of Commons overturned its ban on reporters taking notes in the London gallery and acknowledged the role of the press by providing physical space for reporters. According to Habermas, this moment transformed the English Parliament from a 'target of critical

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 26.
\textsuperscript{18} Habermas, J. \textit{The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere}, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{20} Habermas, J. \textit{The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere}, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p. 21.
comment by public opinion, into the very organ of the opinion'. The newspaper, in the words of Habermas, had become the 'public sphere's preeminent institution'.

The Press and Liberal Democracy

Before the ban overturn, the press had been growing as the need for reporting trade news evolved. Political philosophers across the transatlantic divide, such as John Locke, poet John Milton and, decades later US President Thomas Jefferson, all agitated for the right of the individual to freely express dissent against public authority, considered amongst man's natural rights. In an oft-quoted passage, Milton argued for freedom of written expression: 'he who destroys a good book kills reason itself'. These arguments for free speech and free press underpinned liberal philosophy, which in time was enshrined in the US Constitution, and the laws of both nations.

Habermas' detailing of the historical development of the public sphere established an important early link between the media, specifically the 'quality' newspaper — the subject of this thesis — and free political discourse in the public sphere, a central tenet of liberal democracy. A comprehensive overview of liberal democracy is unnecessary here, other than to acknowledge that the United States of America welded journalism, particularly that of the press, to liberal democracy in its first Amendment: 'Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of speech, or of the press.' In Britain, as in Australia, press freedom is qualified in common law, meaning that free speech is implicit rather than overt, and is refined from time to time by case law.

While Australia had not embedded freedom of the press in its Constitution, the High Court of Australia has interpreted the Constitution as implicitly requiring freedom of expression to

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23 Ibid., p. 62.
24 Ibid., p. 181.
make work the system of government that the Constitution explicitly oversees. One prominent example was the Full Court's ruling over the appeal in a defamation case between former New Zealand Prime Minister, David Lange, and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. The High Court found that the protection of freedom of communication in the Constitution was not absolute, but it was qualified to what 'is necessary for the effective operation of that system of representative and responsible government provided for by the Constitution'.

This High Court judgment acknowledged the necessary relationship between the Australian media and its role in supporting democratic government:

While the system of representative government for which the Constitution provides does not expressly mention freedom of communication, it can hardly be doubted, given the history of representative government and the holding of elections under that system prior to federation, that the elections for which the Constitution provides were intended to be free elections ...

Openness, transparency and accountability of the elected representatives to the people have been central tenets of democratic accountability facilitated by the media. The media's reputation as the Fourth Estate evolved when British politician Edmund Burke reportedly said: 'there were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all'. Thus, democracy depends on the State accepting criticism of its power. Australia and some European democracies, including the United Kingdom and Scandinavia in recognition of this important media role, subsidise the press or broadcast media to ensure plurality of opinion in a commercially sensitive industry where popular and sensational news can be interesting to the public but not in the public interest. Despite fears that state-funded media might result in muzzling the media, Schudson argued studies repeatedly show this not to be the case. Publically funded media, within a liberal regime, were generally not beholden to government viewpoints. On the contrary, they were often shown to be more critical of government policy than their commercially driven

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29 Ibid.
32 Norway, Sweden and Finland.
counterparts.\textsuperscript{33} Scholar Nicholas Garnham, speaking about the British Broadcasting Corporation, aligned the Habermasian public sphere with the unique space between state and civil society to which public broadcasters occupy.\textsuperscript{34} Scannell and Garnham both rely on Habermas' theory to defend the existence of publically funded broadcasters to justify participatory democracy on a mass scale against conservative governments' arguments to reduce funding in favor of the media operating in accordance with the travails of the market.

**Transformation and Degeneration of the Public Sphere**

The ideal of the public sphere and its offerings to democracy did not last, in Habermas' view. While his characterisation of the transformation of the public sphere might be correct, it is the judgment here that his conclusions were excessively gloomy. A point he reconsidered himself, decades later. Habermas reviewed his earlier pessimistic assessment of the state of the public sphere, arguing in 2006 that deliberative democracy was in fact still possible. But, there were preconditions for this to occur, they were if: 'a self-regulatory media system [that] gains independence from its social environments, and if anonymous audiences grant feedback between an informed elite discourse and a responsive civil society.'\textsuperscript{35} These are significant qualifications, and are discussed in the final chapter. The point here is that even in 2006 after review Habermas still had doubts that the public sphere could really overcome the corrupting influences of 'market imperatives'.\textsuperscript{36}

In Habermas' original theory, the success of commerce that engendered the public sphere then became the instrument of its own failure. The media, which he described as 'public organs'\textsuperscript{37} evolving out of the public's use of its own reason, were transformed by the late nineteenth century into 'a medium for culture as an object of consumption'.\textsuperscript{38} Capitalism enabled successful profit-seeking news organisations to concentrate power and cultural

\begin{itemize}
  \item Schudson, M. *The Sociology of News*, p. 205.
  \item Ibid., p. 422.
  \item Habermas, J. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 2.
  \item Ibid., p. 183.
\end{itemize}
authority, thus interrupting the free flow of ideas. Habermas stated that newspapers succumbed to the needs of their publishers, rather than their editors, arguing that, 'they will do as they are told in the private interest of a profit-orientated enterprise'.\textsuperscript{39} Habermas' criticism of the modern mass media was blunt and scathing: 'The world fashioned by the mass media is a public sphere in appearance only.'\textsuperscript{40}

Habermas deplored the 'penny press' produced in the United States from the 1830s, with its mass circulations, its tawdry content purchased for a penny (a cent). He loathed the 'yellow journalism' of sensationalist papers of the late nineteenth century out of New York, so dubbed originally because of the appearance of a yellow comic character, but becoming synonymous with scandal and sleaze.\textsuperscript{41} He argued that, with these publications, the public sphere lost its political character. His coined term 'psychological facilitation' described how the intellectual threshold had been lowered, allowing easier participation for many, but without leaving any lasting 'facility' of knowledge acquirement. The mass consumption of culture had become an end in itself in a consumerist society, and the once rigorous distinction between fact and fiction was ever more frequently abandoned. Habermas declared that:

\begin{quote}
News and reports and even editorial opinions are dressed up with all the accoutrements of entertainment literature, whereas on the other hand the bellettrist contributions aim for the strictly 'realistic' reduplication of reality 'as it is' on the level of clichés and thus, in turn, erase the line between fiction and report.\textsuperscript{42}
\end{quote}

This uncharitable description of the state of the mass media stretched to include newer media such as radio and television. Perhaps more so, because the broadcast media have a 'more penetrating' impact, but little opportunity for the audience to say something in reply or to disagree, other than the exchange of consumptions, tastes and preferences, claimed Habermas.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p. 186.  
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p. 171.  
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 168.  
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 170.  
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 171.
As newspapers in the twentieth century transmuted from family-run businesses to large organisations dependent on mass advertising, their political role 'as a dealer in public opinion',\(^{44}\) often motivated by a profitless pedagogical aim (according to Habermas) gave way to the commodification of opinion for a profit-orientated enterprise.\(^ {45}\) In extension, commercial techniques for proffering opinion led to the development of professional public relations firms, where appearance rather than substance triumphed. Habermas argued:

> Public relations do not genuinely concern public opinion but opinion in the sense of reputation. The public sphere becomes the court before whose public prestige can be displayed — rather than in which public critical debate is carried on.\(^ {46}\)

For Habermas, structural transformation had occurred because of 'refeudalisation' of society, as public and private realms blurred because of private organisations assuming public power, and the state encroaching on private affairs.\(^ {47}\) Individuals' intimate lives leached into the public realm: 'The mass media recommend themselves as addressees of personal needs and difficulties, as authorities for advice on the problems of life,' stated Habermas.\(^ {48}\) This enabled the 'reifications'\(^ {49}\) of individuals' inner lives, which further played into the hands of public relations specialists manipulating the public for consumerist goals.\(^ {50}\) The end result was that the public sphere had become an illusion.\(^ {51}\) It was abused to assume advertising functions and provide political and economic propaganda.\(^ {52}\) Thus, the cycle of development, transformation from a bourgeois to mass audience, and finally the disintegration of the public sphere was complete — ironically falling on its own sword of the mass movement toward marketisation and liberalism, which led to capitalism, and eventually, hyper commercialism.

**Contesting Habermas**

Habermas' theory is compelling, as testified by the many texts dedicated to it, but it is also

\(^{44}\) Ibid., p. 182.
\(^{45}\) Ibid., p. 186.
\(^{46}\) Ibid., p. 201.
\(^{47}\) Ibid., p. 142.
\(^{48}\) Ibid., p. 172.
\(^{49}\) Ibid.
\(^{50}\) Ibid., p. 175.
\(^{51}\) Ibid., p. 171.
\(^{52}\) Ibid., p. 174.
flawed. Craig Calhoun identified that a central weakness was the unfair, asymmetrical assessment of the intellectual underpinnings of the centuries that saw the development, transformation and disintegration of the public sphere under the progression of capitalism. To paraphrase Calhoun, Habermas moved from Locke and Kant in the eighteenth century, to Karl Marx and John Stuart Mill in the nineteenth, with no comparable leading thinkers cited in the twentieth, but plenty of criticism of the mass media and its consumers.\(^55\)

Another key criticism, shared by this author, was the overestimation of the degeneration of the public sphere. It was elitist for Habermas to suggest the end result of such degeneration meant critical thinking was only undertaken by, 'minorities of specialists who put their reason to use nonpublicly and the great mass of consumers whose receptiveness is public but uncritical'.\(^54\) It was also elitist and an oversimplification to assert that 'common' opinion, plebeian discourse, had completely undermined rational-critical discourse of the public sphere.

Notwithstanding such criticisms, some of Habermas' writings about the degeneration of the public sphere are eerily prophetic, and instructive of the contemporaneous global mass media, particularly the effects of the Internet, which did not exist at the time of Habermas' original thesis. The rise of the blogosphere and popular social networking sites such as Twitter, MySpace and Facebook, where individual personal information is broadcast to potentially millions, is akin to Habermas' description of the subversion of the private and public spheres, arguably to the detriment of rational-critical debate. He wrote:

> Indeed the public sphere becomes the sphere for the publicizing of private biographies, so that the accidental fate of the so-called man in the street or that of systematically managed stars attain publicity, while publically relevant developments and decisions are garbed in private dress and through personalization distorted to the point of unrecognizability.\(^55\)

Indeed, it is true that the 'tweets' of 'systematically managed stars' like Kim Kardashian or Kanye West (and their on-off-on relationship), are the subject of much media attention,

\(^{53}\) Calhoun, C. *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, p. 33.

\(^{54}\) Habermas, J. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 175.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., pp. 171-2.
globally. But to argue that the 'word fashioned by the mass media is a public sphere in appearance only',\textsuperscript{56} underestimates the global awareness and potential for political change that can be engendered through the exchange of information through the global mass media, and indeed, social networking sites.

For example, as The Times journalist Lev Grossman highlighted immediately following the controversial outcome of the June 2009 Iranian election, Twitter was the medium of choice of mass protestors across the world to express outrage at the lack of transparency of that election. The Internet traffic was so great that the US government requested Twitter's founders to delay a system upgrade so that the Iranian Government could not as easily suppress free speech, which it had partially achieved by shutting down local print and broadcast media.\textsuperscript{57}

**The Media's Role as the Fourth Estate in a Post-liberal Era**

Habermas questioned whether democracy was possible because of what he described as a depoliticalisation of the public sphere in the post-liberal era, which in part he attributed to: 'the newspaper, as it developed into a capitalist undertaking, [and] became enmeshed in a web of interests extraneous to business that sought to exercise influence upon it'.\textsuperscript{58} In short, the newspaper became a 'gate through which privileged private interests invaded the public sphere'.\textsuperscript{59} Certainly, contemporary scholars also challenge the media's role as the Fourth Estate. Julianne Schultz, in her book that borrows this iconic phrase in its title, argued that the Australian news media at times struggled to be guardians for public accountability:

>The ideal of the news media successfully fulfilling a political role that transcends its commercial obligations has been seriously battered. Its power, commercial ambitions and ethical weakness have undermined its institutional standing. There is now a widespread, and reasonable, doubt that

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\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 171.
\textsuperscript{58} Habermas, J. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 185.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
the contemporary news media can any longer adequately fulfill the historic role the press created for itself several hundred years ago.\textsuperscript{60}

Yet, despite strong words, Schultz concluded that the investigative reporting, particularly of mastheads such as the \textit{National Times} and \textit{The Age} in the 1980s, had reinvigorated the ideal of the Fourth Estate.\textsuperscript{61} She also acknowledged the important contributions from television in performing this public interest function, namely the ABC program \textit{Four Corners}. But, according to Schultz, the decade that followed witnessed a diminution in the 'quantum and the quality of the investigative journalism produced in the 1990s'.\textsuperscript{62}

\textit{'Manufactured Consent'}

Decades before Schultz, and even Habermas, Walter Lippmann stated in his 1922 book \textit{Public Opinion} that the mass media were altering the nature of public political discourse. He penned: 'the significant revolution of modern times is not industrial, economic or political, but the revolution taking place in the art of creating consent among the governed'.\textsuperscript{63} Lippmann, a political columnist and a leader of the 'interpretative style' of journalism — where journalists saw their role as not just reporting, but explaining events\textsuperscript{64} — was among the first to describe the transformative role of the media and its power to create or recreate the way we see the world, and thus mediate reality. Many decades later, British academic Geoff Mulgan stated it as a 'banal fact' that in contemporary times plainly: 'we now live in a world in which fantasy and reality are impossible to distinguish'.\textsuperscript{65}

In a similar vein, and influenced by the context of the Cold War, both Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman radically addressed the domination and power role of the mass media in their analyses of the media as gatekeepers. They used a propaganda model, through the lens

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., p. 238.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., p. 228.
\textsuperscript{64} Schudson, M. \textit{The Sociology of News}, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., p. 17.
of political economy, to explain the performance of the US media.\textsuperscript{66} They argued that Western media subliminally activate news filters to pander to powerful commercial and political interests when deciding what has news value. The essential elements informing the propaganda model were: increasingly concentrated media ownership; advertising as a primary media income source; reliance on information provided by purveyors of propaganda such as public relations specialists and government lobbyists; and finally, what he termed anticomunism — the negative reaction to any news that seemed to support Communist ideology.\textsuperscript{67}

Habermas also subscribed to the mass media as agents of propaganda, but he concluded with the open question of whether there was potential for the public sphere to be reconstituted as a genuine means of articulating a critical-rational debate. Or whether, 'domination and power persists as a negative constant?'\textsuperscript{68} Nonetheless, as Calhoun argued, Habermas' general view of the mass media was 'uniformly negative.'\textsuperscript{69}

There were other omissions in Habermas' thesis; although an historically embedded theory, important social histories were neglected. The transformative role of social movements such as the political participation of the 1960s including mass protests over the Vietnam War, were omitted: 'The absence of social movements from Habermas' account thus also reflects an inattention to agency, to the struggles by which both public spheres and its participants are actively made and remade.'\textsuperscript{70} The same can be said for the absence of understanding of the transformative role of nationalism, feminism and identity politics\textsuperscript{71} and perspectives engaging religion and science.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., p. 2.
\textsuperscript{68} Habermas, J. \textit{The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere}, p. 250.
\textsuperscript{69} Calhoun, C. \textit{Habermas and the Public Sphere}, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., p. 37.
\textsuperscript{71} Fraser, N. 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,' p. 109.
On the latter points, Habermas unquestioningly accepted that the Enlightenment and path to modernity were linked to the rise of rational-critical discourse and, in this reality, religion was diametrically opposed to science. David Zaret provided an alternative analysis to the singular 'ideal' public sphere and that was that multiple public spheres existed, and that religion and science were central thematic topics then, and not just critical reasoning and mercantilism, as portrayed in Habermas' account.

Multiple Public Spheres

Zaret's critique of Habermas is useful here because, like the analysis of other academics including Eley, Baker, Garnham and Fraser, it supports the concept that multiple and overlapping public spheres do exist. Eley concluded that the threat, ascribed by Habermas, of the public sphere collapsing through contamination of plebian opinions caused by the 'commodification of cultural production' was not compelling. Rather, Eley saw that 'this sphere [advanced-capitalist society] was in its origin and early development a representation of a larger civilisation in which capitalism was — along with printing, bible reading and science — a dominant element'. In other words, multiple spheres existed then, and as will be argued, still do.

Fraser made a similar argument. She identified four problematic assumptions within Habermas' theory, including his proposal that different classes interact as equals in rational-critical debate because societal equality is not a precondition for political democracy. She argued to the contrary: the dominant bourgeois can often through subtle means undermine the arguments of someone considered below their social strata. She extended this argument to the asymmetry of social interaction between men and women, in some instances, whereby men speak over the top of women or dismiss outright their ideas without consideration.

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73 Calhoun, C. Habermas and the Public Sphere, pp. 35-36.
75 Calhoun, C. Habermas and the Public Sphere, p. 37.
77 Ibid.
78 Fraser, N. 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,' p. 119.
79 Ibid.
reaction to this subordination, women, and other social groups including blue-collar workers, homosexuals and non-whites, create their own alternative rational-critical debates that can offer counter discourses and provide alternative interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs. Thus, Fraser challenged Habermas' assumption that just one sphere existed. She also questioned why the rational-critical discourse should be about the 'common good', and devoid of private interests intersecting. Also, Fraser refuted Habermas' notion that the democratic public sphere required a sharp separation between civil society and state. She concluded that the 'bourgeois concept is not adequate for current late-capitalist societies and that a post bourgeois conception of critical theory was needed to describe specifically participatory democracy.

**Rethinking Critical Theory and The Public Sphere**

Fraser's arguments calling for a rethinking of critical theory are constructive to the discussion later in this review about the tensions between the old media and newer media, such as digital media. Fraser's earlier arguments fit well with those of Australian academic, Catherine Lumby (returned to later), who defended the online environment as more than just 'noise' but as constituting a genuine political public sphere in its own right. A point of difference though, is that Lumby critiqued Habermas' pessimistic conclusions about the disintegration of the modern public sphere, whereas Fraser rejected Habermas' starting point: the normative ideal of his bourgeois conception of the public sphere.

Any adequate conception of democracy in late-capitalist societies required preconditions, Fraser argued. These were: one, the true elimination of social inequity, rather than 'bracketing' it to one side; two, that a multiplicity of spheres is better than the single sphere; three, that the theory should consider 'private issues'; and it must allow for 'strong and weak publics' and, lastly, it must be capable of encompassing more than a bourgeois construct.

For others, it was Habermas' historical approach that was the target of criticism. Scannell,

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80 Ibid., p. 123.
81 Ibid., p. 137.
82 Ibid., p. 136.
like Calhoun, argued that Habermas' ideal contains an inherent paradox because tensions between the historical and normative aspects of the theory were unresolved: 'It stands as a yet unrealised norm for deliberative politics,' he stated. Scannell questioned whether there was ever such a thing as the public sphere. Schudson also posed this question, reflecting on the historical experience of political activity during the USA's colonial era. While Schudson agreed that the concept of a public sphere was indispensable as a model for what a good society should achieve, he argued that it was not grounded in his interpretation of the facts of US civil society through the centuries, to the present. Garnham argued that the processes of globalisation, and advances of technology, enabled national publics to be citizens of the world. He contended that it might be more apt to consider that we as a public coexist in an international public sphere.

The arguments put forward by Eley, Baker et al. about the existence of multiple public spheres; and the observation by Calhoun that Habermas had over emphasised the disintegration of the public sphere, are agreed with here, and will be returned to throughout this thesis. Notwithstanding these contestations, it is important to identify what Habermas did do, and that was to articulate ahead of his time a relationship between journalism, print and the public sphere, and the challenges to it. These challenges were namely the commercialisation of the mass media, rampant consumerism, the rise of public relations specialists and vested interests intruding into the public sphere to influence rational-critical discourse.

Importantly, as Schudson identified, Habermas provided a normative 'ideal' of how the public sphere could work. He provided a model of how private persons could freely discuss and debate public issues of the day to foster open political discourse in a democracy, and journalism could act as a faithful intermediary to relay that information beyond face-to-face communication. Habermas gave form to a debate about the role of the media informing the public sphere that is as relevant today as it was at the time of his writing. In Calhoun's words:

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83 Scannell, P. Media and Communication, p. 251.
85 Ibid.
86 Garnham, N. 'The Media and the Public Sphere,' in ed., C. Calhoun, Habermas and the Public Sphere, p. 368.
'The most important destiny of Habermas' first book may prove to be this: not to stand as an authoritative statement but to be an immensely fruitful generator of new research, analysis and theory.\(^\text{87}\) For these reasons, Habermas' public sphere theory was a theoretical starting point for this thesis to examine the role Australian newspapers (specifically broadsheets) have played delivering investigative journalism to the public sphere to provide democratic accountability.

**Benedict Anderson's 'Imagined Communities'**

But first, as this review narrows in on the 'gaps' in the literature, it is worth considering a significant theory of nationalism that, like Habermas' public sphere theory, reinforced the important role that newspapers have played in nurturing civil society. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* gave special mention to the role of newspapers (and books) in linking readers together in an 'imagined community' with a common interest, which facilitated the construct of nationalism.\(^\text{88}\) Here, Anderson's theory is discussed not for its contribution to nationalism, but because of his insights into the civic function of newspapers. Much like Habermas, Anderson identified the important role that newspapers have played in bringing people together in a shared space. For Habermas, this space was the public sphere, for Anderson it was a shared consciousness, or an 'imagined community' whereby individuals as newspaper readers, could feel connected to others they did not know, and probably never would.

Anderson argued Gutenberg's printing press transformed face-to-face communication of ideas. Before its invention, the spread of ideas was limited to spoken language, which was restricted by geographical distance and the absence of translators to interpret diverse, provincial languages. Gutenberg enabled information to be distributed to a wider, common audience who, over time, learned the dominant written language of the region. Coining the term, print-capitalism, to describe the rise and influence of mass printing on these transforming cultures, Anderson stated: 'print-capitalism… made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in

\(^{87}\) Calhoun, C. *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, p. 41.  
profoundly new ways'. Borrowing G. W. F Hegel's pithy observation that newspapers had become the modern person's substitute for morning prayers, Anderson believed that newspapers connected people through a mass ceremony in which they were anonymous bit players in a much wider community. He describes this secular 'community in anonymity' as the hallmark of modern nations.

Anderson stated that between the years of 1691 and 1820, more than 2120 mastheads were published in North America. These newspapers typically reported news: of the metropole; commerce, such as the shipping news; significant establishment marriages; and colonial political appointments. Anderson stated:

In this way, the newspaper ... quite naturally and even apolitically, created an imagined community among a specific assemblage of fellow-readers, to whom these ships, brides, bishops, and prices belonged. In time, of course, it was only expected that political elements would enter in.

With time, political elements did emerge and in this way the 'imagined community' was comparable to the role newspapers played informing the Habermasian public sphere. Importantly, Anderson stated that: 'one fertile trait of such newspapers was always their provinciality', meaning that they were important to readers because the stories in them were consequential to their day-to-day lives. This observation has influenced the way this author thinks about the role of newspapers in the public sphere, and will be returned to shortly in this chapter, and again in the methodology section (see Chapter Four).

'Imagined Communities' and Australian Newspapers

To extrapolate Anderson's argument, and apply it to modern day Australia, because print newspapers are losing readership, it can be reasonably argued that the 'imagined community'

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90 Ibid., p. 39.
91 Ibid., p. 40.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
created by the ritual of reading a particular masthead has shrunk. It is also reasonable to argue that this 'community' has transformed, much of it transferring online, as citizens check the Internet throughout the day for news updates, thereby starting a new ritual. However, Australians are not necessarily checking the same websites, nor seeking the same information. Thus, the communities that are online are plural, fragmented and perhaps not as provincial as they once were. Further, the content they seek is not necessarily informing political discourse, and in many cases is about individuals and personal interests. As identified in Chapter Two, a minority of the overall time spent on the Internet is dedicated to reading and viewing news. The Internet has global reach and transcends national boundaries. Conceivably, this global sphere dilutes local influence, and transforms the public sphere from a provincial one to a global one, as Garnham identified.

Schudson and Brian McNair both argued that the globalisation of media required a new way to consider our public world. Schudson stated: 'journalism's global prominence may even engender a sense of world community, shared human fate and human rights that transcend nations ... news becomes a part of the daily rethinking and reconstruction of a common social world'.\(^\text{94}\) Perhaps this is true, however, the observation here is that the digital sphere might not yet replicate all the functions provided to the public sphere by the earlier community created around the Australian print media. One example where this might not be replicated is investigative journalism. While it is true that investigative print stories are placed online, they are funded and resourced by the print operation. In 2012, there were few online news sites completely independent of print resourcing, and therefore few digital news sites that could afford to employ journalists in their own right to originate investigative journalism. The new philanthropically funded Global Mail is one Australian exception. However, by 2013 its future looks uncertain after it shed 20 per cent of its journalists, and its funding is soon to run out.\(^\text{95}\) The important point is that, while exceptions exist, if print newspapers were to cease publishing tomorrow, the revenue source of their online versions is not yet sufficient to originate expensive journalism such as investigative journalism that can fulfill the functions of the Fourth Estate within the Australian public sphere.

\(^{94}\) Ibid., p. 212.
Further, online and print versions of Australian newspapers differ in content. Earlier studies showed this was common, and that online newspaper content was generally less diverse and more entertainment-focused than content of its print equivalent.\textsuperscript{96} Empirical studies have established that the more a medium relied on advertising revenues, as opposed to a mix of advertising and newspaper sales, the less diverse is its content.\textsuperscript{97} This is important in the context that most online versions of newspapers rely heavily on advertising revenue — although, increasingly, newspapers are introducing online subscriptions through a paywall such as News Limited's The Australian, and Fairfax Media's, Australian Financial Review. Even so, these online publications have vastly fewer subscribers, compared to their print editions, meaning that advertising is still the dominant revenue source for online news.

US academic Philip Meyer stated that there were important points of difference between print newspapers and other news media. He argued print newspapers could remain viable, albeit with a smaller audience share, if they retained local community trust.\textsuperscript{98} He argued that providing readers with evidenced-based journalism, largely outside the domain of bloggers, allowed 'quality' newspapers to maintain community trust and thereby empowered them to demand political accountability. He stated that at the core of evidence-based journalism was investigative journalism. But, in order to afford the costs associated with this type of reporting, newspapers needed to aim for 'quality' readers who sought the truth as a defense against political and advertising spin.\textsuperscript{99} In this way, voters were provided with 'quality' information to make decisions at the ballot box that strengthened democratic accountability. He recommended that newspapers seeking to be a 'quality' masthead should jettison resources used to gather frivolous, non-consequential news items, which, in the current information-rich environment, fail to add value to the masthead's brand. Put into Habermasian terms, newspapers that fail to do this add to the degeneration of the public sphere.

To consider Meyer's arguments through the lens of Anderson's theory, 'quality' readers equate to a smaller 'imagined community'. By definition, 'non-quality' readers were not catered for. McNair observed that in terms of political reporting this had become a reality in Britain. He found that Britain had a 'two-tiered' information market, whereby the greatest proportion of political journalism was written for educated, informed sections of the population. Sally Young also found a two-tiered information market existed within the offerings of the Australian media. McNair questioned how then does the media, 'prevent the majority of allegedly apathetic or disinterested citizens from falling even further behind in the distribution of political information?' Meyer addressed this question with reference to sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld's 'two-step flow' of information theory, and argued that voters also get information from each other, as much as directly from news media. According to Meyer, as long as the elite read high-end media it will flow to the general public. Therefore, it would not matter if the original 'imagined community' were small.

This, however, sits uncomfortably with a contrary argument presented earlier from Nancy Fraser, who stated that plural spheres exist because different groups of different ordinations do not communicate with one another. Yet, even if they do not communicate, it does not necessarily negate Meyer's argument, because he also stated that the Internet would assist the flow-on of information. A functioning, accountable democracy relied on keeping 'quality' information flowing. For Meyer, this meant: 'maintaining a strong and trusted agency to originate it. Originate is the operative word. Newspapers originate content and have that position of trust in the minds of the public.' Democracy, under Meyer's model, was strongest if several conditions were met, including the survival of 'quality' print newspapers and accurate passage of information from individuals of one social strata to another, and here the Internet can be useful and complementary, as a distributor of information, rather than as

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102 Meyer, P. The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age, p. 213.
103 Ibid., p. 123.
an originator. It should be noted that the Internet also distributes misinformation and hoaxes equally well, which undermine transparency and accountability in a democracy.\textsuperscript{105}

Australian and former editor of London's The Times, Robert Thomson, argued that the public sphere, or rather what he labels 'that ugly room called "the information space"', was best occupied by 'quality' journalism, and urged commentators not to fixate on the medium, whether it be print or digital. He stated: 'That franchise in fact is what will distinguish a provider of information, whether it is a newspaper with the longevity of The Times or a completely contemporary creation that exploits a new-fangled medium with old-fashioned journalism.'\textsuperscript{106} While his words sound sensible, the problem with this argument in the Australian context is that a sustainable funding model for providing 'quality' journalism in the online sphere has not been satisfactorily identified to date in 2012. There are many experiments with paywalls, micropayments, online advertising, philanthropy and so on, but no single model to replace the once thriving hardcopy economic model of print journalism. Hence, print newspapers are still an important originator, and provider, of 'quality' journalism.

When Thomson made that speech in 2005, he cited Japan's decade-long research and development in the race to create electronic paper to replace newsprint.\textsuperscript{107} In 2010, Apple launched its answer for replacing paper with a screen with the launch of the iPad — as did Amazon, a few years before, with the Kindle, and as have many other technology companies since. But so far the widespread use of tablet technology has not eased the falling revenues of Australian newspaper businesses.\textsuperscript{108}

Habermas and Anderson provide useful theories for understanding the unique role newspapers have played to date in communicating rational-critical debate and engaging civic community. The print newspaper business is at a crossroads and its future unknown, whilst

\textsuperscript{105} Delaney, B. 'Hoaxes May Feed the Hungry Beast, but They Erode Trust,' The Age, 23 October 2009, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., p. 14.
the Internet is ever expanding as a global information highway. It is argued here that Habermas overstated it when he said the public sphere was just an illusion now, and that only *the* public sphere existed, when, as argued by Fraser and others, multiple public spheres exist, and these include global, but fragmented, virtual communities in the digital era. For purposes of consistency, the public sphere will be expressed as a singular from here on, but the author accepts that it a plural concept. Print newspapers provide unique and important information to the public sphere, and one important example, as Meyer argued, is investigative journalism.

**The Modern Mass Media: Pessimists Versus Optimists**

Scholarly argument about the function of the mass media in the public sphere can be considered in terms of a continuum between poles of optimism and pessimism. Habermas' theory nears the pessimistic end, but not as pessimistic as his forefathers at the Frankfurt school, Adorno and Horkheimer, who viewed modernisation as losing sight of the path to human emancipation and instead turned into a 'nightmare of an unleashed will bent on domination'. Habermas himself described Adorno's negativity as a 'cul de sac of despair'. Chomsky and Herman's control theory of the political economy of the mass media also is situated in the negative. They viewed the media as a monolithic apparatus for manufacturing consent to hapless individuals. At the far end of the pessimism scale was Jean Baudrillard's writings on the silent minority, where he argued that democratic participation had steadily declined and the public sphere, like liberal democracy, was in fact an elitist, bourgeois construct. Baudrillard's postmodernist position saw the public sphere as serving the masters that created it and, therefore by definition, it could not serve the genuine interests of the greater population. Among contemporary Australian scholars, Schultz would be closer to the middle of the spectrum. She argued that the Fourth Estate role of media in Australia was revived by investigative reporting in the 1980s, and its future was dependent on the 'vigilance and insistence' of journalists, editors and media proprietors to hold those with power to

110 Ibid., p. 46.
112 McNair, B. *Journalism and Democracy: An Evaluation of the Political Public Sphere*, London: Routledge, 2000, p. 11.
account and to be accountable themselves in that process.\textsuperscript{113}

At the positive end of the continuum are McNair and Schudson. They do acknowledge problems with the mass media, such as falling print circulations and closures of mastheads in liberal democracies, but are generally optimistic about the mass media's contribution to the public sphere. For example, McNair argued that contemporary media could no longer be viewed as a negative, linear 'control paradigm' of dominant commercial interests manipulating the unsuspecting consumer through the managed consent of the media.\textsuperscript{114} McNair borrowed the 1944 term 'cultural chaos' from Adorno and Horkheimer and playfully turned it sideways to describe the current state of the global media, which was underscored by anarchy and disruption, but also allowed for 'dissent, openness and diversity rather than closure, exclusivity and ideological homogeneity'.\textsuperscript{115} Although 'chaos' has negative connotations, McNair nonetheless provided a useful way of rethinking the modern mass media in all its guises: the commercial broadcast and print media, government sponsored public broadcasters, web-based citizen journalists, bloggers and other veritably eclectic contributors with ranging agendas.

McNair argued political reporting was inherent to a well functioning public sphere, and profiled British newspapers to test for a 'crisis' in political journalism. Although this thesis is focused on investigative journalism and Australia, his research was useful for considering methodology. McNair assessed different mastheads using four general criteria: quantity of information; quality of information; the degree of critical scrutiny allowed of the political elite; and the amount of access provided to the public — a condition set by Habermas as a condition of a properly functioning public sphere.\textsuperscript{116} He concluded positively: The political public sphere (in Britain at least) is 'larger, denser and accessible to more people than at any previous point in Britain's cultural history, and it continues to expand'.\textsuperscript{117} He found that it was tabloid rather than quality newspapers that were losing circulation (at this point in time, which is no longer the case), and that the challenge was to move away from a delineated two-

\textsuperscript{113} Schultz, J. Reviving the Fourth Estate: Democracy, Accountability and the Media, p. 238.
\textsuperscript{114} McNair, B. Cultural Chaos: Journalism, News and Power in a Globalised World, p. vii.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{116} McNair, B. Journalism and Democracy: An Evaluation of the Political Public Sphere, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., p. 39.
tiered political information market that sharply separated the well-informed affluent from an uninterested, general public.118

Some of the key problems with McNair's analysis are what Michael Bromley called an attempt to quantify a limited range of media's contribution to the public sphere based on a 'self-referential' and subjective set of measures.119 In essence, Bromley found McNair's conclusion was the more media the better; and quality would come from quantity. Bromley and others, such as Mark Brewin, were critical that the public sphere was seen as existing largely through the machinery of the media and not other public sectors such as higher education.120 Here, this argument seems unfair, given that McNair's interest is the mass media, and his methodology is sympathetic to Habermas, who established the strong relationship between the public sphere and print media.

The Role of Print Investigative Journalism in The Public Sphere

Schudson opens the debate further than McNair by examining the contributing role of journalism to the public sphere more broadly than political reporting. This is important to this thesis. Schudson, in his later writings argued the unique role investigative journalism had played informing the public, and identified print investigative journalism as particularly important.121 Investigative journalism protected democracy, and was intrinsic to the public sphere in two ways, Schudson stated. The first was that it struck fear of publicity among powerful leaders to caution them away from wrongdoing against the public good. Even if the audience was small, the embarrassment was usually large. Second, investigative journalism engaged the attentive elites and triggered public debate about issues of democratic accountability, much as described in the Habermasian ideal.122

118 Ibid., p. 41.
122 Ibid., p 14.
Moreover, it is the print medium, and not other media, that have traditionally been most consistent at producing investigative journalism. Schudson described newspaper journalists as assembling the frontline of this type of news, and described other media as parasites that then feed off it. He stated the print investigative journalist's role was essential to democracy: 'The investigative reporter is the star of a watchdog press … democracies need an unlovable press.'

British academic Bob Franklin, while less pessimistic about the future of newspapers than computer entrepreneur Bill Gates who (sardonically) insisted that the last edition of a newspaper would be 2012, was more negative than Schudson or McNair. He argued that investigative journalism was under serious threat in print. This threat was attributed to a widespread trend toward a downmarket approach to news in a bid to increase circulations and revenues and cut costs. He described this change to papers using British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge's expression, 'newszak'. It characterised the raft of changes to style and content of papers to appeal to a wider audience. Franklin argued this trend to tabloidisation was: 'a retreat from investigative journalism and hard news to the preferred territory of "softer" or "lighter" stories … journalists are more concerned to report stories which interest the public rather than stories which are in the public interest'.

While Franklin argued that tabloid media were less inclined to do investigative reporting, which is one reason why this author will focus research here on the Australian broadsheet, it is important to acknowledge the protracted academic debate between defenders and critics of tabloid media. While its deserved space cannot be provided here, an overview of the arguments of the defenders of tabloid media recognises that there is no scholarly unanimity about the value (or harm) of tabloid news, or the modern trend of tabloidisation, and its impact on democratic accountability.

123 Ibid., p. 9.
124 Ibid., p. 8.
126 Ibid., p. 15.
Tabloidisation of the Print Media

Proponents of the tabloid, of which John Fiske is well recognised, argue that this popularised form of media positively subverts the elitist, dominant social order. Fiske argued that the 'serious' press and their news values and practices support elitism and are a vehicle for the elite classes' interpretation of events to maintain control. Tabloids, on the other hand, even their fantastical stories, allowed for 'other' truths. They, Fiske argued, provided an 'alternative reality to the official one and [carried] utopianized fantasies of emancipation from the constraints of poverty and perceived social failure'. Similarly, John Langer argued that it was the contribution of tabloids to 'other news', and not 'serious' news which made them political texts just as much as the broadsheets. Tabloids' irreverence and human interest stories that reflected the lives of their readers could act to destabilise the dominant ideological order, which was supported by providers of 'serious' news, he contended. There are other earlier advocates too, such as Helen Hughes, who writing in the 1930s stated that tabloids were delivering the general population easy-to-access political information, thereby broadening political debates by enabling the inclusion of non-elites. Ian Connell also argued that tabloids used different practices and stories and language to address issues of social structure and order, considered the domain of 'serious news'. Tabloid stories that focused on personalities and celebrities also allowed for recognition of social difference in society and the inherent tension that brought, he stated.

While not discounting these alternative viewpoints, this author is persuaded by the arguments of Colin Sparks, John Street, Bob Franklin and Peter Dahlgren, and others more critical of tabloid content, which they claim can, at times, impede the workings of democracy through self-serving populism, and an emphasis on the private, in preference to reporting public democratic processes. Dahlgren's general view was that tabloids and tabloidisation of 'serious' papers was a threat to communicating important matters in the public sphere because

128 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
news content that was 'offering more fun and placing less demands on the audience leads to expectations of, well, more fun and less demands'. Sparks argued 'moral panic' about tabloids existed because changes in education levels, feminisation of the general workforce, and social mobility were redefining readerships and throwing the news market into chaos. This in turn had engendered the 'broadloid' (a broadsheet, tabloid hybrid) and tabloidisation trends. Their content placed 'a greater stress on the personal and private at the expense of the public and structural', Sparks argued. Street stated that any discussion of the fate of investigative journalism was linked to churnalism and the 'dumbing down' of news. He also cautioned that while the narrative of the decline of investigative journalism was widely accepted in scholarly circles it should not be embraced uncritically. He suggested 'a decline in investigative journalism' was context specific. Thus, the next section examines the Australian context.

The 'Golden Era' of Australian Investigative Journalism

According to Australian academic John Henningham, the golden era of Australian investigative journalism followed the glamourisation of it in the US when Washington Post reporters Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward unearthed the Watergate scandal in the early 1970s causing Richard Nixon to lose his presidency.

But London's Sunday Times 'Insight' team also significantly influenced Australian investigative reporting during the 1960s. Editor of The Age Graham Perkin travelled to the UK several times and was reportedly so impressed with the work of London's Sunday Times and its editor Harold Evan that he bought the rights to republish its stories in Australia, including the Kim Philby spy ring story. During the Cold War some spies used journalism as their cover. A famous example was that of British civil servant Kim Philby. No one at the time knew that Philby was a double agent undercover for the British intelligence service MI6, but also giving up national security secrets to Moscow. In 1963, an Australian journalist,

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133 Sparks, C. Tabloid Tales: Global Debates over Media Standards, 2000, p. 36.
Phillip Knightly, who worked for London's *Sunday Times* investigative team 'Insight' was part of the reporting team that investigated and exposed Philby's treachery.  

Perkin also published Knightly's investigative stories about the lapses in testing of the drug Thalidomide. The drug was sold around the world to treat morning sickness, but instead caused thousands of birth defects, including in Australia. The London 'Insight' team later wrote a book 'Suffer the Children' based on their earlier investigations. The *Sunday Times* stories about the harm of Thalidomide in the 1970s led to a £28 million compensation to British victims of the drug, an increase on the earlier 1968 settlement, by the UK manufacturers Diageo.

Schultz, as previously noted, found the 1980s was a particularly important time for Australian investigative journalism, developed from the early investigative successes of the 1970s. Former tabloid and broadsheet editor Bruce Guthrie also credited the rise of investigative reporting in Australia to the interest in it generated from the Watergate affair, and also to the maverick editorship of Graham Perkin at *The Age*, who also established a dedicated investigative unit called 'Insight' in 1967; the London *Sunday Times* investigative team first used the 'Insight' tag in 1963. However as media academic Sybil Nolan points out, 'it would be wrong for anyone to suggest that it [The Age's 'Insight' team] was a pale colonial imitation of its precursor'. The 1980s also saw groundbreaking television investigative stories, especially from ABC's *Four Corners*. But, to date in 2012, Australian radio and online have been poorly represented in producing peer-reviewed award-winning investigative journalism.

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140 *The Telegraph*. 'Thalidomide: Timeline of a Scandal,' retrieved from
September 2012.
141 Ibid.
142 Guthrie, B. 'Interview with the author,' 11 February 2010.
Challenges to Australian Investigative Journalism

One of the contemporary problems Franklin identified for many news organisations, including those in Australia, was that investigative journalism was expensive and therefore a disincentive when newspapers faced cost-cutting. Australian academic Axel Bruns argued that the closing of the 130-year-old The Bulletin magazine, which provided investigative journalism, directly cost Australians an important source of investigative reporting. Bruns wrote when the magazine folded in 2008 that 'the worrying structural problem it reveals is the difficulty of sustaining any venues for the specialized task of investigative journalism in Australian and international media'.

Australian investigative journalist Chris Masters argued that the threat of costly litigation and the time and resources required to undertake investigative reporting, made it almost prohibitive. His exposure of corruption in the Queensland police force that led to a royal commission and more than 100 convictions, including the jailing of Police Commissioner, Terence Lewis, also caused him great personal pain. He stated:

… thirteen years of murderous litigation which took years and years off my life. I mean I think it probably took about three years of intense labour over a thirteen-year period to defend the story. I mean ultimately the justification of what we did was proven but I don't think that that was much of a victory for journalism.

A collaborative study between Australian and US researchers involved interviewing print news editors and senior journalists about litigation and journalists' story topic choices. It found that a 'chilling' effect existed, which was more pronounced in Australia than the US. Tim Marjoribanks and Andrew Kenyon concluded that the quality of public debate about political and public interest matters, was limited by the media's fear of 'lengthy, complex and

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expensive defamation litigation.\textsuperscript{148} Significantly for this thesis, they cautioned that their examination was of well-resourced media organisations, not online news media enterprises, which, in most cases, have fewer financial resources to defend legal actions.

A landmark defamation case brought against business wire service \textit{Dow Jones} by Australian mining magnate Joseph Gutnick in 2002 challenged the assumptions about legal liability and online journalism, providing another reason for caution for originating and disseminating online investigative journalism. Gutnick successfully argued to the Australian High Court that a negative story written about him in New York could be libelous in Victoria because some readers had downloaded the story in the Australian jurisdiction. The High court agreed unanimously that defamation occurred where Internet material was downloaded, not uploaded. The consequence of this decision was that media proprietors, bloggers, journalists or individuals who produced information online, must consider that it does conform to the most restrictive laws across the globe (where it can be downloaded) to avoid potential legal action.\textsuperscript{149} If further precedent were to occur, it might act as an impediment to producing investigative journalism for the online sphere.

\textbf{The 'Crisis' for Australian Newspapers}

Matthew Ricketson maintains that myriad of factors changed Australian mastheads' reporting priorities in the late 1980s. These included the financial success of other media: radio and television, and the escalation of the magazine market — exceeding newspaper readership for the first time in 1992.\textsuperscript{150} He argued that this led to newspapers trying to compete with magazines by adding more lifestyle sections and softer, feature stories to their pages. Then came the Internet.

The revenue and circulation challenges to newspapers resulting from competition with other

media, including digital media, have significantly increased since the 1980s. The Internet is ferocious on print newspapers' cost base, argued Meyer. 'It moves information with zero variable cost, which means it has no barriers to growth, unlike a newspaper, which has to pay for paper, ink and transportation in direct proportion to the number of copies produced. And the Internet's entry costs are low. Anyone with a computer can become a publisher.'\textsuperscript{151} This was well illustrated when Matt Drudge broke the worldwide exclusive of the Lewinsky/Clinton affair in 1998, on his blog site the \textit{Drudge Report}, instantly giving the low-budget blog international fame and recognition.

While costs of print production have increased, and advertising revenues have fallen, print newspapers' penetration within the Australian population also has suffered. Rod Tiffen stated that, 'at the beginning of the twenty-first century, by any criterion the press has a far less central role among the mass media, and by all the most tangible measures [Australian] newspapers are in relative and, increasingly, in absolute decline.'\textsuperscript{152} Tiffen found that Australian mastheads' circulations had not kept pace with population growth and the number of daily newspapers sold per 1000 population almost halved in Australia between 1980 and 2007. This represented a more dramatic decline than in most other advanced democracies.

Significantly, while newspaper penetration was decreasing, the number of proprietors had concentrated in Australia. Tiffen found that, 'two proprietors account for more than 90 per cent of daily metropolitan circulation'.\textsuperscript{153} Of the 11 metropolitan daily newspapers in existence in Australia, Rupert Murdoch's News Limited Corporation owned six, and Fairfax Media owned four. The remaining masthead was in 2012 owned by Kerry Stokes' Seven West Media.

\textbf{Concentrated Media Ownership and Australian Democracy}

Since 1980, international watchdog on democracy, Freedom House, has used freedom of the media as a measure of a nation's democratic legitimacy. Its latest study found that all

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\item \textsuperscript{151} Meyer, P. 'The Elite Newspaper of the Future,' 2009.
\item \textsuperscript{153} Ibid., p. 130.
\end{itemize}
countries had some form of media controls, and in a trend that reflected a worldwide drift Australia's press freedom had decreased since 2002. Although still regarded as having a free media, Australia had shifted from a desirable score of eight in 2002, to a much higher score of 21 — approaching the divide between free and partially free media largely because of its concentrated media ownership.\footnote{Freedom House, Freedom of the Press 1980-2008, retrieved from <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>, accessed 10 March 2010.}

In the 2000s, changes to editorial structures at newspapers such as the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age, conflated the roles of editor and publisher. Tiffen argued that this substantial editorial reform meant newspapers were 'less willing to endanger the profit flow by investing in and publishing investigative journalism.'\footnote{Tiffen, R. 'The Press,' p. 145.} Further, the Internet had sped up the news cycle, and Alan Kohler, a former editor of The Age, observed that journalists had less time available to dig for stories because the pressure was for breaking news. Moreover, he argued that collectively the Australian media had failed 'to invest in journalism at the same rate as the manipulators of journalism have invested in the means of manipulation,'\footnote{Kohler, A. Australian Financial Review, 27 September 2002, cited in Tiffen, R., 'The Press,' pp. 145-146.} meaning that they were outnumbered in the task of unravelling spin from news.

**The Internet: 'Noise' or a New Frontier for Rational-Critical Discourse?**

While clearly the revenues and circulations of Australian newspapers have shrunk, the implications of weakened press institutions for the public sphere are not so clear. This is because new spheres have developed in the digital space.

At the beginning of this review, it was argued that Habermas provided a useful lens for analysing the contemporary media landscape and the tensions between traditional and new media. Thus, John Merrill argued that while the Internet had fundamentally altered media, importantly a new communitarian dimension was being created.\footnote{Merrill, J., Gade, P. & F. Blevens, Twilight of Press Freedom: The Rise of People's Journalism, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001, p. 71.} McNair also wrote optimistically of the emerging de-feudalisation of the public sphere, evidenced by the open discussion and popular participation online among citizens, where exchange of information
was largely free in all respects. He also argued that the commercialisation that compromised the editorial decisions of the print media had yet to infiltrate online news to the same degree.\textsuperscript{158}

But, research into Internet use patterns on political engagement found that Internet literacy was not directly linked to political participation or virtual social capital. While the findings were limited to South Korea, Kim Ji-Young concluded that the proliferation of virtual communities over the Internet was not an accurate indicator of political revitalisation.\textsuperscript{159} Bromley, like Kohler, also argued that the emergence of the digital media sphere had to be reconciled with the growth of political 'spin' and emergence of 'information architects'.\textsuperscript{160} Tiffen also made a salient point for this thesis in that many blogs rely on information from newspapers, and that newspapers remain in 2012 the key agenda setters. In Australia, newspapers were still the single largest employers of professional journalists.\textsuperscript{161} Further, Toynbee's comment about many blogs was almost a contemporary echo of Habermas, when he warned:

\begin{quote}
… the increased personalization of public communication, the focus of media on 'private' life and on individual experience. This can be seen in some ways as a depoliticization of public communication and hence a shrinking away of the public sphere which increases the power of elites by leaving important areas of social life outside the arena of public debate.\textsuperscript{162}
\end{quote}

However, Australian media commentator Catherine Lumby disagreed with the negative critiques of the online sphere. She does not cringe at the public fascination with the personal, nor does she dismiss it as not meaningful or depoliticised, but argued that a new analytical framework is required to make sense of the Post Habermasian public sphere. 'This proliferation of "tabloid" style stories in the upmarket media directs us to a fundamental shift

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\textsuperscript{158} McNair, B. \textit{Journalism and Democracy: An Evaluation of the Political Public Sphere}, London: Routledge, 2000, p. 176.
\textsuperscript{160} Bromley, M. 'Journalism and Democracy: An Evaluation of the Political Public Sphere by Brian McNair,' p. 110.
\textsuperscript{161} Tiffen, R. 'The Press,' p. 147.
\end{flushleft}
in the shape of our public sphere — and, ultimately, of Western democracy itself,' she argued.\textsuperscript{163} The once personal issues of feminism, gender and environmental issues could be articulated in the public realm and were being politicised, Lumby argued. The result was that the boundaries between public and private have blurred and were now inherently unstable. The role of 'old media' and 'new media' were linked to create, '…a kind of virtual map of the diversity which defines contemporary democracies'.\textsuperscript{164}

Political scientist John Keane also identified that in the digital age 'power-monitoring and power-controlling devices have begun to extend sideways and downward through the whole political order'.\textsuperscript{165} He argued that the digital age was a time of 'communicative abundance' and provided exciting, new mechanisms for observing and reporting abuses of power. But Keane cautioned that as yet communicative abundance was not evenly distributed and showed up a power gap between the information poor and information rich. The poor, he argued, were deemed to be 'almost unneeded as communicators, or as consumers of media products'.\textsuperscript{166} This, he argued, 'contradicts the basic principle that all citizens are equally entitled to communicate their opinions, and periodically to give elected and unelected representatives a rough ride'.\textsuperscript{167}

McNair argued a limitation of the digital sphere was that it was overcrowded and noisy. Paradoxically, navigating through the noise could return power to the traditional information gatekeepers such as newspapers that could act as 'sense-makers' of the cacophony.\textsuperscript{168} The challenge, said McNair, was to find some order amid the chaos, and to preserve the decentralising and democratising effects of these new digital public spheres at national and global levels.\textsuperscript{169} Applying Lumby, Keane and Fraser's analyses, finding a new framework beyond Habermas, perhaps even beyond liberal democracy, would enable a greater understanding of these new spheres of influence. But that discussion is for another time.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., p. 121.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., p. 740.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., p. 207.
\end{flushleft}
The research area emerging from this discussion that is pertinent here arises out of what is absent, rather than present, in the Australian online news sphere. The digital space inclusive of citizen journalists, blogs, websites and social networking sites may provide a communicative space with political functions but, in terms of investigative journalism, there is little evidence of it being produced there, other than as an online presence lifted from newspapers' hardcopy editions known as 'shovelware'.

Internationally, there are more examples than in Australia of investigative journalism originating online. In the US particularly, original investigative reporting is being funded and generated online. Sites such as ProPublica and the Center for Public Integrity can support their own investigative research through philanthropic sponsors. In an historical first, this online site in 2010 won the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for its investigative journalism. This online model was copied in Australia in 2012 with the launch of the Global Mail. To its credit, it quickly established its credentials in investigative journalism with five reporters jointly commended for their report 'Patients at Risk' in the 2012 Walkley award category for investigative journalism.

Nonetheless, there are very few examples of local, original online investigative journalism; most is still produced by print newspapers. Yet, it has been identified in this and the preceding chapters that the print economic model is collapsing. If newspapers were to stop producing investigative journalism would Australians lose something unique and important from the public sphere, not yet replicated in the digital sphere? That 'something' being investigative journalism?

The dearth of research into this question about the role newspapers play in delivering investigative journalism to the public sphere, and the role it might have played in supporting democratic accountability in Australia are omissions of scholarly analysis identified in this

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literature review. Certainly, McKnight's analysis of investigative journalism between the years of 1945 and 1965 was a useful contribution, but like Schultz' work on the Fourth Estate which is also important, these analyses ended before the digital media age fully arrived, and before print newspapers' economic decline accelerated. Through qualitative and quantitative research, this thesis aims to bridge this knowledge gap. The aim is to explore the role of print newspapers in delivering investigative journalism to the Australian public sphere, from its profitable past through to the era of the Internet. The research will examine whether, as newspaper budgets have tightened, their investigative journalism output and 'quality' has consequently altered.

**Conclusion**

From the outset it was identified that the key theoretical components of this thesis was the relationship between the mass media, the public sphere and liberal democracy. Priority was given here to discussing Habermas' multidisciplinary theory because it provided a useful narrative for discussing the interconnectedness between the mass media, newspapers and liberal democracy. Habermas was able to conceptualise and chronologically account for the emergence of the 'ideal' public sphere. This review supported the critiques of Zaret, Garnham and Fraser who challenged Habermas, asserting that one or more public spheres existed during the dominance of bourgeois discourse; and that multiple spheres continue to exist, and remain important for critical social discourse, despite the disintegration outlined by Habermas in his original thesis.

Like Habermas, Benedict Anderson also demonstrated the historical role that newspapers played in creating a common consciousness — one of the building blocks of nationalism. Together, their theories are important for understanding this thesis' focus on newspapers' contribution to the public sphere. However, Anderson's imagined community fostered by the newspaper has shrunk, and, according to McNair a two-tiered information market exists, which, in Australia could crudely be delineated as tabloid and broadsheet. However, as Sparks and Franklin observed, processes of tabloidisation have also affected broadsheets, producing the 'broadloid'. 
It is the view here that while commercialisation has led to editorial choices in newspaper newsrooms, which affect both the style and content of Australia's newspapers, how this impacts on the public sphere and democratic accountability is less clear. Habermas' definitive argument is rejected here, the notion that 'the world fashioned by the mass media is a public sphere in appearance only'. It is contended here that 'quality' newspapers still matter to informing the public sphere. Tabloid newspapers may also, but that is a debate that exceeds the parameters of this study. Investigative reporting, as identified by Schudson, has the potential to hold those vested with public authority accountable to those who are subjected to that power in the private realm, and thus strengthen democratic accountability. This review has identified Australian investigative journalism as a scholarly area requiring more research, and this thesis will address this. From the writings of McKnight, Schultz, Schudson, Franklin and others, it is concluded that broadsheets were likely to be the significant producers of investigative journalism in Australia during the last half of the twentieth century. This is not empirically known in the Australian context, and is another identifiable gap in the literature that this thesis aims to address.

As Catherine Lumby discussed, tensions exist between traditional and new media in shaping public debates and agenda setting. And while the Internet is an economic threat to the viability of newspapers as advertising migrates online from print, the relationships between the old and new, and consequences for the public sphere, are not straightforward. New media has lowered the economic barriers to entry, potentially enabling anyone with a laptop or mobile phone to participate and to produce material as a 'citizen journalist'. It is also a busy, fragmented space that creates much noise (and, at times confusion), but also has global reach. As McNair has argued, it should not be automatically assumed that it has the equivalent influence on public agenda setting in 2012 as traditional media, who have had power returned to them as 'sense makers' of the cacophony. Certainly, there is great potential within this global sphere of influence to reshape democracy and empower private citizens through monitory democracy. But as Keane observed, monitory democracy's future 'has not yet been determined'. This thesis will also examine the previously uninvestigated area of scholarship

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172 Habermas, J. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 171.
173 Ibid., p. xxxiii.
to determine whether the online sphere is producing original Australian investigative journalism, and if so, whether it is in amounts that could replicate broadsheets' contribution.

Along the continuum between the optimists and pessimists regarding the role of the mass media and their contributions to the public sphere, McNair's was a positive analysis, concluding there were new opportunities for 'quality' journalism amid the chaos of the tensions between the traditional media and the new. The pessimists, such as the Frankfurt School, and Chomsky and Herman see that the postmodern world is one of manufactured consent, overseen by big business with the public as passive consumers of public relations propaganda. Situated between these two positions was Franklin, who concluded that while newspapers were not yet dead, investigative reporting was in trouble. Street and Bruns also acknowledged that the costliness of investigative reporting meant it was often an early casualty of cost cutting in newsrooms. Having established in this chapter the relationship between democratic accountability, the public sphere, broadsheet newspapers and investigative journalism, the overall aim of this thesis, now, is to examine broadsheet newspapers' role in contributing investigative journalism to the public sphere, from newspapers' affluent past, through to the digital age.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Research Design

Introduction

The preceding chapters have outlined the theory and background about the democratic role that newspapers can play in informing Australian society through the public sphere. These chapters have also discussed the contemporary central problem for print newspapers: an uncertain economic future because of the decline in advertising revenues and paid circulations.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the role of investigative journalism in Australian broadsheet newspapers in an era of declining revenues to support it, compared to their past. The research methods will examine how broadsheets employ investigative journalism — its scope, depth and frequency — and the societal outcomes of it. These outcomes would directly relate to the investigative efforts of the masthead, and could include judicial or other inquiries, sackings of corrupt public officials, overturning wrongful convictions, court orders or unearthing a suppressed truth in the public interest, among others. Outcomes were recorded to examine the claim that this type of journalism is important for informing the public and for democratic accountability.

From the earlier chapters, key research questions arose that were valuable for selecting appropriate methods to achieve the aim of this research. Four research methods were used to triangulate findings. Three of these involve quantitative research in the form of content analysis. The other is a qualitative research method using semi-structured interviews with media specialists, including academics, investigative journalists, newspaper and online editors, market analysts and media unionists to interrogate the role of investigative journalism in Australian broadsheets.
This chapter begins generally, and explains why a combination of methods was preferred to a single method, and what other methods were also considered, but not used. It then examines key considerations of content analysis and discusses how the newspapers were coded and what was measured. After the general discussion about content analysis, the chapter then explains the specific details of each sample used, and how each method was employed. Also, time is taken to explain how an operative definition of investigative journalism was developed to undertake the content analyses. There is no accepted single definition for investigative journalism in the literature, and the efforts here to develop a robust and purposeful definition might be useful to inform future studies about investigative journalism. But first the key research questions that arose from the background and literature review chapters:

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between falling circulations and revenues of Australian broadsheet newspapers and the quantity of investigative journalism stories?
2. What is the relationship between falling circulations and revenues of Australian broadsheet newspapers and the quality\(^1\) of investigative journalism?
3. Have broadsheets contributed significantly to the pool of quality investigative journalism in Australia?
4. How does Australian investigative journalism contribute to the public sphere? For example, what societal outcomes might have occurred because of investigative journalism?
5. Is the Australian public sphere receiving, and benefitting from, new sources of investigative journalism, and if so, how do these compare to print broadsheet contributions?
6. Do media institutions matter when it comes to producing investigative journalism?

\(^1\) The operational definition tackles the question of what constitutes 'quality' by codifying features of investigative journalism (as discussed in the background chapters) and applying a numerical measure out of 10.
Methods and Subjects Considered for Study

This study focuses on broadsheet newspapers as a subject, because of their perceived role providing the public sphere with investigative journalism that strengthens democratic accountability. Tabloid newspapers, television and radio, such as the ABC television program Four Corners and its radio program Background Briefing also produce investigative journalism. But they are not considered for examination here, for several reasons.

Firstly, a quantifiable study on the investigative journalism produced by Four Corners has been recently performed. Secondly, the ABC, compared to commercial outlets, predominantly produces television and radio programs providing Australian investigative journalism. But because it is taxpayer-funded it is less exposed to the vicissitudes of the economic market compared to commercial media (if government funding is maintained).

Thirdly, Australia's metropolitan tabloids generally have stronger circulations than broadsheets (and larger revenues). To take the Melbourne example — one of only two Australian capital cities that have competing daily metropolitan papers — the 2010 circulation figures of The Age (broadsheet) was approximately 210,000 copies sold per week day, compared to the Herald-Sun's (tabloid) 515,000. Thus, with the overall malaise of the print newspaper sector, print broadsheets' long-term viability is particularly vulnerable in the digital age compared to other media. Also, generally, Australian tabloids' investigative role is peripheral to their core editorial priorities promoted to their readers, such as daily news, sport, consumer affairs, celebrity profiles, and law and order stories.

Fourthly, while it is true that commercial television faces similar economic pressure as print newspapers — free-to-air television is losing audience in Australia, however theirs was a slower decline than newspaper circulations at the time of writing. Further, commercial television moved away from investigative journalism after ratings falls in current affairs.

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programming during the 1990s. Finally, time, resources and space restrict this study. So therefore a detailed examination of the investigative journalism of broadsheet newspapers was preferred to a broader study involving other media that could not offer the same depth of analysis in the space and time provided. Also, broadsheets have historically provided a significant proportion of this type of journalism over the decades.

Investigative journalism is the subject chosen for examination. It is one form of expensive, public interest journalism produced by print broadsheet newspapers. Other types of expensive journalism, also in the public interest exist, and are also likely to be affected by declining print revenues and include foreign and political journalism. These reporting genres also contribute to the political discourse of the public sphere and can provide democratic accountability. Like investigative journalism, these are relatively expensive stories to produce because they require additional resources compared to general news reporting; resources such as satellite bureaus, specialist reporters, and time and travel.

Notwithstanding these alternative forms of expensive journalism, investigative journalism is the focus of this research for several key reasons. Of greatest importance is that until now broadsheet investigative journalism has never been quantifiably researched in Australia. Investigative journalism is a journalistic strength of broadsheets, as acknowledged through the peer-reviewed Walkley awards over decades; and its contribution to the public sphere is therefore a research area of interest to international and Australian scholars.

Methods to examine investigative journalism include qualitative methods, such as: interviews, participation and observation studies of newsrooms, and discourse analysis. Observing newsrooms and journalistic behaviour can be very useful, especially for evaluating theories of the media. However, this method was not used here because of this author's familiarity with newsrooms through past long-term employment in a major metropolitan daily newsroom working as a broadsheet journalist; and then later producing radio and

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television news programs for the ABC. These employment experiences were valuable to reflect upon when critiquing media theories, and for considering what methodologies would be most efficient for examining changes to broadsheet content over time, so it was felt other methods might produce a more insightful outcome given this background experience.

Quantitative methods that could be considered include, longitudinal studies to examine editorial staffing numbers at newspapers, and the resources made available to them to undertake investigative journalism both within a specialist unit or on a news round. Research could also examine from where journalism was sourced. This could involve investigating the way information was collected, whether it was active — through a journalist's own initiative and ingenuity — or passive. Active journalism requires gathering information from interviewing, freedom of information requests, contacts and database analysis, among others. In contrast, passive reporting might include information obtained without scrutiny from press releases, and observational reporting, such as recording court and parliamentary proceedings.

Time analysis of investigative journalists' activities is another research avenue to determine changes over time as a print journalist's role has diversified to include producing online and multimedia content, feature writing for magazine sections of the newspaper, and opinion and commentary. If the research questions concerned public opinion about investigative journalism, then surveys could be used to analyse audience feedback about investigative journalism. A broad study might survey the general public to evaluate their regard for print broadsheet journalism compared to the journalism from the different media they use. The Media Arts and Entertainment Alliance (MEAA) undertook such research when it examined public attitudes to Australian broadsheets and other media in 2008. In essence, it found broadsheets were more trusted sources of information than other media forms in Australia (see Chapter Two.) Case studies of investigative journalism throughout different decades could also be a useful research tool. Clearly, there were many methods that could be employed to interrogate the role of investigative journalism found in Australian broadsheets.

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After considering each of these approaches, this study selected four research methods to examine broadsheets' investigative journalism content. To do this, content analysis was the preferred method for three of the four research methods here. This is because a key concern of this study is to quantify investigative content of broadsheets over time to see if it has changed as revenues and circulations for broadsheets have declined.

Further, focusing on masthead content over other aspects of the newspaper business allows us to see what actually goes out into the public sphere, rather than what is perceived, or what is recollected when key actors are interviewed. As Matthew Ricketson reminds us, 'journalists are notorious for romanticising newsrooms of the past'. Content analysis also enables the researcher to examine journalism over a long period of time, which other methods are unable to do such as participant observation. The advantages of content analysis as a research method for this thesis are discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

However, there is another key concern of this thesis, and that is not just the quantum but also the qualitative features of the investigative journalism of broadsheets over time. A different method is employed to achieve this objective; and that is the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews. Here interviews can be useful. They are included as part of the methodology to complement the quantitative studies, and to provide some context and interpretation to the quantitative findings, which is not something content analysis can do well. Content analysis can tell a researcher what is, or what is not, present in the content, but not necessarily the reasons why. Each of the four research methods will be explained in detail shortly.

**Content Analysis as a Preferred Method**

Many disciplines, including political science, have used content analysis to gather and analyse textual material since the early 20th century. In 1910, at the inaugural meeting of the German Sociological Society, Max Weber suggested it be used to study newspapers. It is a

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10 Ibid., p. 273.
method used for making sense of all types of messages, whether they are words, pictures, ideas or themes.\textsuperscript{11} The communicated material might include historical documents, songs, newspapers, speeches, diaries and official publications. It is particularly useful for analysing large amounts of textual material and comparing them over time and 'at a distance' such as in the case of posthumous and historical works. It is also useful for revealing information that is difficult to see through casual observation.\textsuperscript{12}

Content analysis is 'non-reactive', meaning that the content that is communicated occurs without influence from the act of researching by the researcher.\textsuperscript{13} Lawrence Neuman argued that when dealing with the content of newspapers, 'a better strategy is to examine the newspapers directly using content analysis'.\textsuperscript{14} He argued that content analysis is most useful for research material that is historical.\textsuperscript{15} As content analysis is a non-reactive method, it can provide a systematic and rigorous examination that other methods cannot, and is thus a preferred method in this thesis for examining the investigative journalism content of print newspapers.

Further, as content analysis enables large amounts of textual material to be reduced to relevant and manageable units of data, it can be readily compared from one decade to the next. Robert Weber noted that:

\begin{quote}
The key to content analysis — in fact, to all modes of inquiry — is choosing a strategy for information loss that yields substantially interesting and theoretically useful generalizations while reducing the amount of information analyzed and reported by the investigator.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Content analysis is useful because it can show patterns within newspapers, and patterns concerning their investigative stories, such as: common story genres, page placement of investigative stories, promotion of investigative stories within the newspaper and so on.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 272.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 274.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 273.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 277.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 272.
\end{itemize}
Content analysis' limitation is that it cannot answer why patterns exist, although the findings can be interpreted and deduced through the application of theory and knowledge.\textsuperscript{17} Other methods can help to elucidate reasons for patterns identified by content analysis. For this reason, this study uses a fourth method of semi-structured interviews with media specialists from various backgrounds to guide the interpretation of the content analyses data using their knowledge of the social and historical landscape of Australian journalism.

One of the research objectives was to ascertain if investigative journalism occurs as frequently in broadsheet newspapers compared to the past, and to see if the content has changed over time in terms of story subject and investigative depth. Content analysis is ideal for measuring both the frequency and story subject genres of investigative stories within selected Australian broadsheets. Content analysis can also show what is missing by recording when investigative journalism is absent in the newspaper pages. This was also documented.

\textit{Coding}

Neuman stated that content analysis begins with a chief research question, and the construct is operationalised with a written coding system, defined as a set of instructions on how to systematically observe and record content from the text.\textsuperscript{18} The recording of content can be manifest — meaning it records visible, surface content in a text but does not consider the context — or latent, (also called semantic analysis) which considers underlying, implicit meaning in the context of the text.\textsuperscript{19} Both latent and manifest coding was used when recording data for this project.

The chief research question here was: How do broadsheet newspapers employ investigative journalism? The operative construct was 'employ' and it included the \textit{amount} of investigative journalism; the \textit{prominence} of the investigative journalism in the masthead; and its breadth of subject genres. There is scant literature about methods to operationalise 'investigative journalism'. It was therefore incumbent upon the author to tailor an operational definition of

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., pp. 274 & 277.
investigative journalism in order to perform the content analyses. This was done in two steps — first, the preceding chapters examined the academic literature on the qualities of investigative journalism and a typology was drafted to summarise key qualities. The second step was to take these broad categories and isolate key features of investigative journalism that could be readily identified as individual data fields in a simple matrix that can then be used for coding. As recommended by Robert Weber, each field should be as narrow as possible for greater consistency.\textsuperscript{20}

But, to be purposeful, content analysis needs to be reliable, valid and consistent in its text classification. Weber documented that problems with the method occur if coding rules were not well defined, or when there was ambiguity with word meanings or categories used in the process.\textsuperscript{21} Also, sampling and interpretation of meaning within the text must be done in accordance with the original context of the text, and within the context of its publication. As will be explained shortly, the issue of context was one factor for deciding to use a constructed and stratified sample of broadsheet newspapers rather than a random sample.

Weber noted that, in most cases, sampling was used rather than entire populations for the sake of economy of time and parsimony.\textsuperscript{22} Time was a key consideration in the decision to sample broadsheet newspapers but, equally, so was ensuring that the sample size was sufficiently large to avoid compromising the findings and drawing false conclusions. In the largest of the three content analyses — the broadsheet study — its 'sample' was a month in a selected year, over five decades, from each chosen newspaper. April was selected because it is a more stable news month in the newspaper business calendar. Newspapers experience seasonal changes in news reporting, and April is outside the Australian summer holiday period. During the Christmas period and summer months, fewer stories are likely to be investigated because journalists and newsmakers are on vacation.\textsuperscript{23} April is also far enough from the end of the financial year (30 June) to not be affected by pagination cuts, which can occur if the end of financial year budget is under stress.\textsuperscript{24} This is sometimes why June

\textsuperscript{20} Weber, R. \textit{Basic Content Analysis}, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 15.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p. 42.
\textsuperscript{23} Guthrie, B. 'Interview with the author,' 11 February 2010.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
newspapers have fewer pages than July when the budget is reset. The content analysis involved examining every newspaper page of every day in April in each of the four broadsheets (and their Sunday broadsheet editions) over five decades. The information surveyed totalled 14 months of daily and 6 months of weekend editions. This equated to approximately 21,100 news pages. Of these, pages one, three and five were recorded for up to 70 data fields irrespective of whether investigative journalism was present or not. This amounted to data recorded for 1243 news pages. Extra pages were recorded when investigative journalism was present on pages other than these 'premium' news pages.

There must be consistency in the application of the analysis. For example, different coders should code text in the same way to achieve validity, and this is made easier when the rules for coding are explicit. Thus, a set of coding rules was established and uniformly applied in this project (see Appendix A). Only one coder coded, in this case, the author, ensuring consistency.

Weber argued that content analysis has no singular correct technique, and that investigators need to judge for themselves if the methods employed in the analysis are the most appropriate for their particular problem:

There is no single right way to do content analysis. Instead, investigators must judge what methods are appropriate for their substantive problems...time, effort, skill and art are required to produce results, interpretations, and explanations that are valid and theoretically interesting.

On this point, John Fiske observed that the recording units are open to choice by the researcher and only need to be readily identifiable, and occur frequently enough, for statistical methods of analysis to be valid. Thus, the unit to be coded here was the broadsheet newspaper news page. Content analysis involves sampling, precise measurement,

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25 422 editions and there are approx 50 news pages analysed in each edition = 21,100 newspaper pages. However newspapers grew substantially over the decades ranging from 28 pages in 1971 to 250 pages in 2001. This is a very conservative estimate using 50 pages as an average.
26 Weber, R. Basic Content Analysis, p. 12.
27 Ibid., p. 13.
28 Ibid., p. 68.
and operational definition for abstract constructs. Neuman argued that a researcher could measure four different characteristics of the content, which were: frequency, direction, intensity and space. Not all research projects use all four forms of measurement, although this research did. How each has been interpreted for the purposes of this research is now explained.

Frequency

This is counting if something occurs, and how often it occurs. In this study, the frequency refers to the number of investigative journalism stories that are present on each page of the sampled media. If there were no investigative stories present, this was also recorded. As part of the data collection, the different types of investigative stories were documented. In the general news pages stories were classified using one of 25 story genres. The news genre of the lead story — the story with the largest headline that dominated page one, three and five — was recorded to gather general news information about newspapers in each decade. This data collection also included whether the lead or second story lead was marked 'exclusive' to see how the promotion of stories changed over time. Frequency also related to the number of pictures on each page and advertisements on each page, and these were also recorded to detect general changes about newspapers' layout over time.

Direction

Direction usually relates to the direction of the messages along a continuum, such as positive or negative messages. Here, the direction was a measure between systemic stories and single-issue stories. Systemic stories were those about a systemic issue in the community as opposed to single-issue stories that tend to involve a single case study (see Chapter Two).

30 Neuman, L. W., Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, p. 273.
31 Ibid., p. 275.
32 Ibid., p. 277.
33 The story genres were: arts, business/corporate, consumer affairs, courts, crime/police, defence, economy/trade, education, environment, federal politics, health, human interest, indigenous affairs, industrial relations, international, it/media, local government, no stories, other, religion, social welfare, sport, state politics, statutory authority, transport. Only one genre for each story was applied. If more than one genre could be applied, the dominant theme of the story was used to categorise the genre of 'best fit'.
34 Ibid., p. 275.
Intensity

Intensity relates to the strength of the message in the content. Here, it was used to record the emphasis given to the story by the editors as measured by its page placement. It is a convention that editors put their most newsworthy stories on page one, followed by pages three and five — and this assumption was tested in a pilot study (see below). Stories deemed less important were typically placed on the left hand pages, or the right hand pages later in the news section of the newspaper — colloquially referred to as the 'front book'. Stories placed on right hand pages of page seven and beyond are usually considered of less news value than those on right hand pages closer to page one of the 'front book'. To capture 'intensity' with a simple measuring system a points classification was used with a scale ranging from zero to five (see Appendix A).

Space

A measure of space in content analysis can be 'the size of a text message or the amount of space or volume allocated to it'.[^35a] Here, the size of the story was measured using the newspaper convention of column inches. A column inch is the width of the traditional broadsheet newspaper column. This measure was also translated into a word count, and centimetres to make comparisons across decades.

In sum, content analysis was selected because it is useful for analysing large amounts of content from newspapers. It is non-reactive and therefore provides a rigorous and systematic way of analysing information. It is ideal for comparing one era to another, and measuring information 'at a distance'. It can also measure many different features of the content, including what is not there. When done correctly, it is reliable, stable and therefore a valid method that can be repeated by other researchers to gain the same results. Its limitation is that it cannot tell the researcher why a particular pattern occurs, other research methods are more suitable for this information, and one of those is the qualitative research interview.

[^35a]: Ibid.
Triangulating Research Methods

Quantitative and qualitative research, when combined, can strengthen the interrogation of research questions. The data can validate each other, and they can address different issues and produce a fuller picture of a social phenomenon. They can also contradict, and this is usually the starting point for new theoretical developments when trying to make sense of surprising findings. As Flick, von Kardorff and Steinke observed:

The linking of qualitative and quantitative methods may serve to illuminate different aspects of social phenomena. Using quantitative methods the meaning of social-structural factors of context can then be investigated, and the qualitative methods may be used to study the way in which the actors interpret these contextual factors.

One technique for acquiring this understanding and interpretation of the 'social and historical world' is through the qualitative method of interviewing. This can be achieved through semi-structured interviews, which, according to Kvale and Brinkmann, allow for knowledge to be produced socially in the interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer. They argue that the 'very production of data in the qualitative interview goes beyond a mechanical following of the rules and rests upon the interviewers' skills and situated personal judgment in the posing of the questions'. They describe this type of research as a 'craft' that requires extensive experience in the practice of interviewing, and an understanding of the context and subject matter. For these reasons, and drawing on professional skills gained working as a journalist for more than a decade, this author selected semi-structured interviews as a research method to triangulate findings. This involved using a 'set of personalised questions that were posed to a single actor on the basis of a preliminary investigation with respect to the

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36 Zinn, J. 'Bridging the Quantitative/Qualitative Divide,' Critical Analytical Skills, subject reader, University of Melbourne, 2011.
39 Ibid., p. 82.
40 Ibid.
41 The author has worked as a journalist, broadcaster and producer at The Colac Herald (1989-90); The Age (1997-2001), RRR (199-2003) and ABC (2004-2010).
actor's experiences, policy and world views.\textsuperscript{42} A benefit of the semi-structured interview is that the 'interview design allows for posing subsequent questions that were not foreseen in the interview script', but which may yield further knowledge on the subject area.\textsuperscript{43}

Twenty-two interviews were conducted with media professionals with knowledge about all, or one, of the following areas of media: journalism, investigative journalism, news, Australian broadsheet and/or tabloid newspapers, broadcast, digital technologies, economics, labour force and advertising markets. The objective of the interviews was to gather information to aid the interpretation of patterns and results of the content analyses. Copies of interview questions and transcripts are available on request. The list of subjects is shown in Table 4.6.

**Operational Definition of Investigative Journalism**

In order to perform content analysis on newspapers to measure the frequency, scope and depth of investigative journalism, the concept of investigative journalism must be clearly defined. In Chapter Two, it was argued that investigative journalism was different to other types of reporting because of its function — what it aims to do — and its methods, which involve greater time and effort than daily reporting. Chapter Two identified that key features of investigative journalism, derived from the academic literature, were: stories about a 'truth', that was hidden or unknown or not thought of in such a way before. The information may not be strictly new, but must be revelatory. The 'truth' was in the public interest, meaning that the story was more than simply scandalous or voyeuristic; and, a moral standard was implied. It might gather new information by disclosing a secret wrongdoing, or it might be a revision of an accepted version of a 'truth', which was revisited when the factual basis of the original account was questioned. Investigative journalism also challenged veracity in a way that daily reporting did not. Investigative journalism can be an inquiry of those with power on behalf of the powerless. In this way it takes on an advocacy role for the public interest, and gives a voice to many, not just the privileged.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
Chapter Two outlined broad categories summarising the functions of investigative journalism using typologies separately developed by Hugo de Burgh and Rodney Tiffen. As there was overlap between the Tiffen and de Burgh investigative journalism categories, these were conflated to develop a new typology of investigative journalism. The challenge next was to create rules that test whether Australian newspaper stories possessed the qualities outlined in this typology.

There are few examples of researchers who have undertaken this work, but one notable Australian example was the 2009 pilot study of journalist Marni Cordell. She examined the amount of investigative journalism produced by ABC *Four Corners*, using content analysis. Based on definitions of investigative journalism of Ettema and Glasser, de Burgh and others, she created five categories of investigative journalism for her analysis. They were:

1. The target of the story must be a public figure and/or a person or group in a position of power (can be collective), and the information revealed about that target must be in the public interest.
2. The story must reveal information that someone wants suppressed and/or is for other reasons concealed from the public that would only have been uncovered through the journalist's initiative.
3. The journalist must seek to pursue the issue beyond allegation and denial.
4. The story must reveal new information and/or bring together information that is already in the public domain in a way that is revelatory.
5. The story must alert us to systemic failures and/or point out where society is failing/or falling short of purported standards.

Cordell's research found only half of her sampled data of *Four Corners'* stories fitted with her definition of investigative journalism. One reason for this might be that her categories were quite prescriptive. Referring back to the research of David McKnight (see Chapter Two), investigative journalism in Australia had two historic peaks. The first was better described as

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'single-issue' journalism rather than journalism that alerted to society's systemic failings. The second peak, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, of investigative journalism was more likely to be stories that alerted us to these systemic failures. This thesis examines both time periods and is mindful about excluding journalism that may fall into the former category of 'single-issue' journalism. In fact, if single-issue journalism were again on the rise, such a finding would be of interest. Therefore, Cordell's category five was not considered for use here.

Using the typology drafted in Chapter Two, and with consideration to Cordell's research, a series of questions probing investigative story elements was created. Table 4.1 lists these.

Table 4.1: Key Considerations for Defining Investigative Journalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Useful Questions for Identifying Investigative Journalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does the article set the agenda/or is exclusive to that publication?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is the story an example of active journalism?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is there evidence of time and research?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Does the story investigate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Is the story of political relevance or of some import to the public sphere?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Does it identify victims or villains?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Does it investigative a breach of public trust?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Does it pursue a suppressed truth (that is in the public interest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Is a moral standard implied?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

As this research is about Australian journalism, and in reference to the writing of Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (see Chapter Three), a final story element was added; and that was, provinciality. Put simply, this means the story was relevant to Australia and the Australian public sphere. It was either written about Australia, or Australian-centric issues. In a globalised and digitalised world, many overseas stories are included in Australia's newspapers, including investigative stories. But these stories were only included in the sample if these stories fitted the requirements of provinciality.
To bring some order to the points above, and to make the definition of investigative journalism operational, a matrix was constructed showing these 10 story elements (fields) and the rules and guidelines used to decide if a story should be considered investigative journalism (see Appendix B). Each of the 10 elements was worth one point, thus an investigative story could be awarded a maximum of 10 points. A story that scored below six points was not classified as investigative journalism, nor was any story that failed to meet the mandatory fields, as outlined in Table 4.2 below.

**Mandatory Fields of the Operational Definition**

It was recognised that some investigative stories would not contain every story element, and nor should they be required to. For example, some investigative stories were not about victims or villains, but were still investigative stories. But, in order to be able to differentiate between investigative stories and other news reports, six of the above elements were designated as mandatory. These had to be present before a story was considered investigative.

**Table 4.2: Mandatory Fields for Defining Investigative Journalism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandatory Requirements to be Labelled Investigative Journalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sets the agenda (exclusive and revelatory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The revelatory information belongs in the public rather than private sphere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The story investigates, rather than relying on a compilation of opposing viewpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The story uses techniques of active reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Investigative journalism takes time and effort, which is evident in the reportage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Provinciality: The investigative story is relevant to Australians and for Australians</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author*

These qualities were considered non-negotiable for this study when evaluating if a story met the definition of investigative journalism. The four non-compulsory fields remain salient features of investigative journalism, but were not considered by themselves as critical for determining whether a story was 'investigative' or not. Nonetheless, these additional four points served to further distinguish between stories that met the minimum standard, and those
that had many of the prescribed hallmarks of investigative journalism in this constructed measuring scheme. The full matrix used to evaluate whether stories were investigative journalism or not, according to the mandatory and non-mandatory fields outlined above, is in Appendix B.

**Applying a Sliding Scale to Investigative Journalism**

For simplicity, and to get a snapshot of investigative stories over time, a traffic light sliding scale was applied to the scoring system. For example, stories with the *most* features of investigative reporting scored between 8-10 points, and placed in the green zone. Investigative stories that met the *minimum* requirements, scoring either 6 or 7 points, were placed in the amber zone. Stories that *failed* to meet the mandatory requirements, were not considered investigative journalism and relegated to the red zone (see Figure 4.1).

![Figure 4.1: The Traffic Light Scale System Used to Define Investigative Journalism](source: Author)

**Reliability of the Research**

Reliability problems can occur when the method, or definition, for collecting data changes. To minimise this particular problem, a one-month pilot program was conducted to ensure the written rules for collecting the information were stable, and therefore did not need to be adjusted during the data collection process. The recorded month was May 2011 of *The Age*. The pilot data was not included in the results.

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46 Ibid., p. 289.
Recording the Data

To ensure accurate records were kept of the recorded data, the author researched computer programmes that best suited the research needs. As the author is most familiar with the Apple operating system, a FileMaker Inc. database called Bento was purchased, which allowed the author to custom design a recording template (or recording sheet) for data collection. The sheet, with up to 70 fields of data for each recordable unit, was very large. Therefore, it is not possible to replicate it in its entirety here, however a section is provided see Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Example of Custom Designed Coding Template from Bento.4 (version 4.0.2)

Source: Author; Bento software created by FileMaker Inc.

The software was fully compatible with Microsoft Excel, which is excellent for performing calculations and determining frequencies. Excel was used for data calculations, such as sums,
percentages and mean scores. Each unit (a newspaper page or website or Walkley award) had one recording sheet. The complete database is available for review on request.

**Reading the Data Template**

The left hand column of the data template allowed basic information to be recorded about the medium — whether it be a website, or newspaper. It included information about the publication, the page number, the date, the number and percentage of advertisements on the page, and whether the advertisement was privately or publically funded. The number of stories on the page was recorded, as well as the genre of the page's lead story. The number of pictures was also recorded for each page analysed. The purpose of recording this general information — which was not about investigative reporting per se — was to develop a basic profile of how mastheads compared across decades and between different proprietors. Depending on the source of the data, not all fields were relevant. For example, a website did not need a page number recorded.

The right hand side of the template was specifically for recording the four characteristics of measurement outlined earlier: intensity, frequency, direction and space. It also recorded whether a story passed or failed the investigative test. It itemised each of the 10 fields of the operational definition described above (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2), so that any reviewer of the research could see how the story was coded, and may observe why or why not it was judged as investigative journalism. This data was useful for observing which field's criteria were most difficult to satisfy.

The right hand space of the template also recorded information about how the newspaper or website promoted an investigative story. This recorded information included: whether a story was labelled investigative journalism; the journalist's name; what page the investigation was placed on; whether it was part of an investigative series, and whether the story was a collaboration with other media outlets. It also recorded whether sources were named in the investigation, and the story's length or word count. The societal outcomes of investigative stories were tracked by using digital archival databases *Lexis Nexis* and *Factiva*, to see what, if any, public outcomes may have resulted from the investigative story. Outcomes might
include a parliamentary inquiry, judicial hearing, ministerial reshuffle and departmental reforms among others. Details about the specific application of the four separate research methods now follow.

**Applying Each of the Methods: 1. Content Analysis of Broadsheets**

The broadsheet and the Walkley studies were the most time-consuming components of the research project. The broadsheet study involved content analysis of investigative journalism from four selected broadsheets (including the tabloid *National Times* which converted to broadsheet in latter years) from five decades over a span of 40 years (see Table 4.3 for a summary of the years and newspapers analysed). The analysis aimed to determine what investigative journalism was published, but also what story genres were not published. The sample size was 1,243 news pages (422 editions), which involved surveying approximately 21,100 news pages and collecting more than 60,000 individual field entries in the database. Collecting data for each edition of each newspaper took on average 30 to 45 minutes, amounting to an estimated 320 hours of research work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Masthead and Number of Editions Analysed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age/Sunday Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td><strong>150</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL: 422 editions.**

*Source: Author*

**Selected Newspapers**
Selected newspapers were *The Age*, *The Australian*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *National Times* and their respective broadsheet Sunday editions. These papers were carefully chosen for the following reasons. First, there are few major metropolitan broadsheets left in Australia and these are the key mastheads. For example, *The Age* was listed in the top 10 newspapers in the world when edited by Graham Perkin (editor 1966-75).\(^{47}\) This period was also considered the 'golden era' of *The Age* in terms of its investigative journalism because of the editorship of Perkin,\(^{48}\) who set up a specialist investigative unit in 1967 called 'Insight' — inspired by London's *Sunday Times* newspaper.\(^ {49}\) 'Insight' took time to develop and became a 'dedicated investigative outfit with a full-time staff of three' in November 1973.\(^ {50}\)

*The Australian* was selected because it belonged to the News Limited masthead group, which publishes approximately 65 per cent of Australian metropolitan daily newspapers, and it is the only daily general news national broadsheet in Australia.\(^ {51}\) The *Sunday Australian* is included in the 1971 analysis. The Sunday paper was launched in January 1971 to appeal to a broader audience than the daily Australian, particularly to women readers. It lasted 17 months and was an unforeseen casualty when Murdoch bought the *Sydney Telegraph* from the Packer family in June 1972.\(^ {52}\)

The *Sydney Morning Herald* was included because it is Australia's oldest newspaper, a broadsheet, and a dedicated Sydney paper. It also provides a Sydney perspective of Australian news compared to Melbourne's broadsheet *The Age*.

The *National Times* had a formidable reputation as a newspaper of journalism excellence and for its investigative reporting and was therefore included in the sample, despite its physical appearance of a tabloid-sized newspaper for most of its 16-year history.\(^ {53}\) It began publication


\(^{48}\) Ibid; Guthrie, B. 'Interview with the author,' 11 February 2010.


\(^{50}\) Ibid., p. 294 & 310.


in 1971 and ceased in 1987, becoming a broadsheet a year earlier. It is the only newspaper in the sample that closed during the economic turbulence of the late 1980s and the only newspaper to convert from tabloid to broadsheet. It was selected because according to McKnight and others, such as its one-time editor Evan Whitton, 'size didn't shape the reporting style.' But, also because it is important to establish whether The National Times' absence impacted on the amount of Australian print investigative journalism in the public sphere.

During the process of selecting which newspapers to include in the broadsheet sample, the Australian Financial Review was also considered. It, like the National Times, has a readership and content that can be seen as more typical of a broadsheet than a tabloid. It has an AB readership demographic and it engages in analysis, commentary and investigative journalism in its pages. But it was not included in the broadsheet study for four main reasons. First, it is a niche business publication and the other newspapers that were included in this part of the study were general news mastheads. Second, the newspapers selected involved reviewing 21,100 news pages and collecting more than 60,000 individual field entries of data. To add another six-day a week masthead would substantially increase the work requirements and timeframe for completing the thesis. Also, the AFR, unlike the National Times did not convert to broadsheet at any stage. Finally, the AFR is included in two of the four other research methods of this thesis, including the content analysis of the Walkley awards. Including the AFR in the other methods allows for its investigative journalism to be examined in some capacity for this thesis.

**Time Period**

A month of each masthead in each selected year was analysed. The periods chosen for analysis were 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011. These years are a decade apart and should be sufficiently spread to reveal changing patterns in investigative reporting styles and frequency from these mastheads. The year 1971 was specifically chosen as a starting point because it was during the Age's Perkin era of editorship. The decade between 1971 and 1981

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54 Whitton, E. 'Interview with the author,' 8 February 2012.
provides a before-and-after perspective on The Age's investigative journalism during and after Perkin's editorship. He died in 1975. The Australian began publication in 1964, and by the 1970s should have had time to establish itself. The National Times was also active during the first two decades of the analysis.

The second period for analysis was April 1981. It followed from when newspaper circulations peaked in the late seventies and early eighties.\textsuperscript{55} It was also the start of the decade celebrated as a 'golden era' by many, including academics Julianne Schultz and David McKnight.\textsuperscript{56} The late 1980s also saw the Australian economy decline, the stock market crash, and the National Times close. The end of this decade was also the beginning of closures of Australia's evening papers.\textsuperscript{57}

By 1991, broadsheet circulations and advertising were declining (see Chapter Two). It was also the decade that saw the beginnings of the commercial aspects of the Internet with the arrival of the World Wide Web. Certainly, by 2001, the digital age had fully arrived. Social media such as Twitter and Facebook were created in this decade. The National Times presented an interesting challenge because it ceased publication in 1987 as a broadsheet (earlier it was a tabloid) and re-emerged as an online vehicle for Fairfax's opinion, analysis and commentary in 2009. But the online masthead did not meet the investigative story search criteria for this study because, as yet, it does not produce investigative reporting.

\textit{Story Selection — The Process of Finding Investigative Journalism}

The stories were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Primarily from the news pages of the selected masthead. The 'premium' news pages were analysed: pages one, three and five. The justification for this was that any unique

investigative piece — which requires resources, time and effort — would be expected to be
given priority coverage, and therefore should appear, or at least be promoted, on the
newspapers' most prominent news pages.

2. All stories on all pages of the newspaper (not just one, three and five) were assessed
although not formally recorded unless a story resembling investigative journalism was
detected. The stories were then assessed to see if they fitted with the operational definition,
and recorded as a pass or fail. This was done to ensure all investigative stories were included
in the sample regardless of the newspaper page on which they were published.

3. Additional information about: the lead news story; number of advertisements; pictures and
other details were recorded for pages one, three and five. These same general news details
were also recorded when an investigative story was found on a page beyond the 'premium'
news pages.

4. The same operational definition and recording template was used for each of the content
analyses.

2. Quantitative Analysis of the Walkley Awards

The Walkley Awards were chosen because they provide a sample of unique peer-reviewed
journalism, and as argued by academic Penny O'Donnell, they have prestige within the
Australian media community: 'The Walkley Awards are widely regarded as the leading media
industry prizes in Australia.'\textsuperscript{58} Industry support for the awards can be gauged by the 1300
entries it receives each year. It also secures more than 100 senior industry figures in the
judging process, and attracts major sponsorship.\textsuperscript{59}

The Walkley awards present an exceptional opportunity to understand Australian
investigative journalism over time because, while not a definitive sample of 'quality

\textsuperscript{58} O'Donnell, P. 'That's Gold! Thinking About Excellence in Australian Journalism,\textit{ Australian Journalism
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p. 26.
journalism’, they represent a comprehensive peer-reviewed pool of journalism, including investigative journalism, since the awards’ inception in 1956. They also present an untapped opportunity to test the operational definition of investigative journalism devised here, and provide a chance to test the industry peer-reviewed standard for journalism. Further, the awards are useful for triangulation of methods in this thesis because they showcase examples of journalism and investigative journalism in every year since 1956 (unlike the broadsheet study which uses 10-year periods), and thus, provide a year-by-year sample of exemplar journalism, some of it investigative journalism. Therefore, the primary goal of the Walkley study is to perform a longitudinal test to determine the scale and depth of investigative reporting over seven decades.

O'Donnell also undertook a study of the Walkley awards, in her case, spanning 20 years from 1988 to 2008. O'Donnell specifically examined the recipients of the Gold Walkley — the most coveted prize of the awards. Significantly for this thesis, she found that broadsheet newspapers dominated the coveted award in this time, winning 10 Gold Walkleys. In contrast, tabloid metropolitan newspapers did not win the award. Television journalists were second (winning six times) and radio journalists won the Gold Walkley three times. The Gold Walkley had yet to be awarded to an online journalist during that 20-year span.

As in O'Donnell's study, selected categories were identified for analysis in this thesis. But, the span and number of categories analysed is much broader, from 1956 to 2011. The categories selected were those thought to most likely include examples of newspaper investigative journalism. Therefore, the categories unlikely to provide investigative journalism, such as 'Best Print Headline', and broadcast media categories, were not included in the sample. Of the five original 1956 categories, two have survived to the present day, and were included here: 'Best News Report', and 'Newspaper Feature Writing'.

The sample also included the online category 'Best Online Journalism' in order to capture new media contributions of investigative journalism, and to test the claim that online journalism can contribute 'quality' investigative journalism to the public sphere, and might at

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60 Ibid., p. 53.
61 Ibid.
some point fully replace print. Since the 1990s, many of the categories were no longer media specific, and thus, 'All Media' became eligible to enter. Most of the categories selected for this study were open to 'All Media' in 2011. This provided a useful comparative analysis of investigative journalism between print, broadcast and online media.

The Walkley categories have been amended, updated and added to over the years, and their names have changed. Table 4.4 uses the current title of the award, but entries from categories' previous title incarnations are recorded in the database. The awards were most recently revamped in 2009, to acknowledge the changing delivery platforms of journalism.62 The awards are open to all; this was not the case before 1996, when journalists had to be union members to enter.63 The specific 'Investigative Journalism' category — particularly relevant for this study — was among the newer categories, beginning in 1991 for print media, and open to 'All Media' in 1997 (See Table 4.4). All methods have limitations and the Walkley award content analysis is no exception. Awards yield a sample of peer-reviewed journalism considered exemplary at the time. This journalism is not representative of everyday journalism. However, the triangulation of methods allows for everyday journalism to also be assessed through other methods. The selection of any award winner can be a political act, and the Walkley's may be no different. Nonetheless, the Walkley's remain a useful sample for research analysis because they are peer-reviewed — thereby limiting selection bias — and they offer a unique sample of exemplar journalism across Australia because the Walkley Awards are Australia's only national journalism awards organisation.

To analyse the award-winning stories, the first step was to locate them. The official records have missing, inaccurate or incomplete data, making this a difficult task. The Walkley Foundation was most helpful with this research, providing a definitive list of winners with publication and year details. But, in earlier years, there was sometimes no record of a story's headline or date of publication. This difficulty was overcome through access to hardcopy newspapers, microfilm, microfiche, online media databases and reading about award-winning stories.

stories in several publications. All but five of the stories within the defined sample of 187 stories were located. This research has resulted in the largest repository of Walkley Award-winning stories of its kind.

Each Walkley story took an average of two hours to identify, locate, analyse and to determine its public outcomes, if any. This research task consumed more than 370 hours. A summary of the selected categories, and the number of analysed stories belonging to each category, follow in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Method 2 — Content Analysis of the Walkley Awards (Quantitative Research)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walkley Category</th>
<th>Year Award Commenced (1956-2011)</th>
<th>Media Eligible to Enter</th>
<th>Number of Stories Analysed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best News Report</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Feature Writing</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Online Journalism</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Use of the Medium</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Journalism</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigative Journalism</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>All (1997)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Reporting</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Walkley</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Winners</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>187</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

The same content analysis recording sheet as the broadsheet study was used to record details for each of the 187 Walkley-winning stories. The societal outcomes of winning investigative

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65 A special mention of appreciation to the NSW and University of Melbourne libraries for their invaluable assistance in retrieving the 1950 and 1960 hardcopy archives of Walkley winners.
stories were cross-referenced with digital newspaper archives and databases *LexisNexis* and *Factiva*, and through interviews and correspondence with the journalists when necessary.

3. Content Analysis Online

The third research method was designed to specifically address research question six: 'Is the Australian public sphere receiving and benefitting from new sources of investigative journalism and, if so, how does it compare to the print broadsheet contribution?' It was an online test of Australian news producing sites that do not rely on hard copy resources, but had an exclusive online presence (although their stories might be referenced by print media and others). The aim was to determine if these sites were producers of Australian investigative journalism in their own right, rather than merely distributors for it. The study was undertaken during April 2011 to mirror the broadsheet study's methodology. The news websites must employ their own editorial staff to be considered for inclusion in the sample. The sites selected were: *New Matilda*, *Crikey* and *WikiLeaks*. Although the latter was published to audiences beyond Australia, it met the criterion of 'provinciality' because its stories provided some reporting focused on Australia. This website also met various other definitions of investigative journalism, such as, 'gathering new information by disclosing a secret wrong-doing'.\(^\text{66}\) It was also important to include *WikiLeaks* because of claims that it is a new vehicle for investigative journalism.\(^\text{67}\)

Websites that seem to produce respected journalism in Australia and employ their own journalists but were excluded from this study, include *Business Spectator*, *Eureka Street*, *The Conversation* and *The Monthly* and Swinburne University's *Inside Story*. The first was not selected because its founder, Alan Kohler, confirmed that its business model did not aim to provide investigative journalism.\(^\text{68}\) *Eureka Street* and *The Monthly* did not meet the criterion of an 'exclusive online presence'. At the time of deciding the sample, both had their hardcopy

\[\text{References}\]

66 Tiffen, R. *Scandals, Media, Politics & Corruption in Contemporary Australia*, p. 33; Whitton, E. 'Interview with the author,' 8 February 2012.


68 Kohler, A. 'Interview with the author,' 5 October 2010.
publications to subsidise their journalism costs. This defeats the purpose of the analysis, which was to test if online news websites could independently support investigative journalism without hardcopy revenue. *Inside Story,* is an interesting example that produces original journalism, which also appears in the 'Forum' section of the *Canberra Times.* However, although perhaps a worthwhile site to examine at another time, its hardcopy association meant that it was not included in this study.69

The *Conversation* had begun producing online journalism in 2011, and it meets the 'online only' criterion, but it was not selected because it was newly established and arguably still in an experimental phase in 2011 when the research data collection commenced. It would be worthy of consideration for future studies. *The Conversation* is of particular interest here because it seeks to build a bridge between academic writing and the public sphere, something that Jürgen Habermas had criticised academics for failing to do (see Chapter Three).70 *The Conversation* employs full-time, qualified journalists and editors to publish academic research and writing for a general audience. There were other sites that have appeared since the data was collected and might be worthy considerations for similar future studies such as the *Global Mail.* It is best described as an Australian online example of using philanthropic donations to fund investigative journalism, similar to the very successful Pulitzer Prize winning website in the United States, *ProPublica.*71

The online study involved analysing daily content for a month of the selected websites, subscribing to their news feeds, as well as following them on Twitter. By receiving Twitter updates and news feeds, it was anticipated that no investigative story would be overlooked from these sites, even if the story was unavailable on the website at the time of auditing. The webpage was captured each day in a screen photograph to provide a permanent record using a screen capture software tool, *Paparazzi.*

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71 The prize for investigative reporting went to Sheri Fink for her piece on hospital patients who were allegedly euthanised by overstretched doctors in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The article was backed by not-for-profit website *ProPublica,* which receives grants from philanthropic foundations and makes its stories available for publication by mainstream news outlets. The story was co-published on the *ProPublica* website and in the *New York Times Magazine* in 2009.
Online story data was recorded using the same recording sheet as for the newspapers. It amounted to 90 unique visits to the selected websites during the month, and an archive of 4,970 fields of data. Table 4.5 summarises the website study.

Table 4.5: Method 3 — Content Analysis Online (Quantitative Research)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>WEBSITES (page views*)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crikey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 (April)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total views</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

Each news website was viewed and recorded daily at 4pm during the month of April in 2011. Each view took an average of 30 minutes to record using the same template recording-sheet as for the broadsheet study. This amounted to approximately 45 hours of work.

4. Qualitative Research: Interviews

Twenty-two semi-structured interviews were conducted with reports and investigative journalists, editors, proprietors and media specialists within advertising, unions, and equity firms. The interviewees were selected based on their experience, past positions knowledge of journalism and the business of media. A small number declined to be interviewed, or failed to respond to the interview request. Their names are not included here because no ethical consent was given. After a given time the interview request was redirected to a professional with comparable journalism knowledge and experience. The objective was to find interviewees whose experience collectively represented broadsheets, tabloids, and online and broadcast media. In selecting the sample, consideration was given to achieving broad diversity of views, skill sets and between mastheads of different geographical regions and journalistic traditions.
The purpose of this method was to identify key themes about investigative journalism and its future (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6: Method 4 — Semi-structured Interviews (Qualitative Research)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee*#</th>
<th>Media Experiences</th>
<th>Employer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alan Kohler</td>
<td>Founder Business Spectator, formerly editor The Age</td>
<td>ABC TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Jaspan</td>
<td>Founder The Conversation, formerly editor The Observer, The Scotsman, The Age</td>
<td>The Conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Guthrie</td>
<td>Author, columnist, radio broadcaster formerly editor: Herald Sun, The Age, Sunday Age</td>
<td>ABC /Sunday Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Masters</td>
<td>Investigative journalist including ABC Four Corners</td>
<td>Author, lecturer, freelancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Guerra</td>
<td>Media analyst</td>
<td>Goldman Sachs JB Were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Beecher</td>
<td>Media proprietor, formerly SMH editor</td>
<td>Private Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan Whitton</td>
<td>Investigative Journalist National Times, Truth, SMH</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedley Thomas</td>
<td>Australian Investigative journalist, formerly Courier Mail</td>
<td>Australian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Holmes</td>
<td>ABC Host, formerly Four Corners, Foreign Correspondent, journalist BBC</td>
<td>ABC Media Watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise Connor</td>
<td>Union secretary</td>
<td>MEAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Simons</td>
<td>Journalist/author/academic</td>
<td>University of Melbourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marian Wilkinson</td>
<td>Investigative journalist, formerly SMH, National Times, ABC</td>
<td>ABC Four Corners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Baker</td>
<td>Editor-at-large, formerly investigative bureau chief</td>
<td>Fairfax Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Scott</td>
<td>Managing Director, formerly SMH editor-in-chief</td>
<td>ABC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Gawenda</td>
<td>Academic, formerly editor The Age</td>
<td>University of Melbourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Parks</td>
<td>Academic, formerly editor LA Times</td>
<td>University of South California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Dobbie</td>
<td>Communications manager</td>
<td>MEAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Robinson</td>
<td>Formerly investigative reporter, Sunday Age, Age</td>
<td>Victorian Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafael Epstein</td>
<td>ABC journalist and radio broadcaster, formerly investigative reporter The Age</td>
<td>774 ABC radio Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Baker</td>
<td>Investigative reporter</td>
<td>The Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross Coulthart</td>
<td>Investigative Journalist, formerly Ch. 9 Sunday, SMH</td>
<td>Ch 7. Sunday Night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy Bacon</td>
<td>Academic/ investigative journalist, formerly National Times, Ch. 9 Sunday and Sixty Minutes</td>
<td>University of Technology, Sydney, New Matilda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author; Note: *Ethics and individual's approval to identify; # Several News Limited employees did not accept/respond to the invitation to be interviewed
The interviews are a useful research tool for interpreting the content analyses data, and informing the author's understanding about the results findings. With transcription, the interviews took approximately 132 hours to process. Each interview was approximately an hour in length, and was recorded, transcribed and stored in accordance with the human research ethics approval conditions of the University of Melbourne.

**Conclusion**

The research questions for this study were developed from the background chapters. They were designed to expose new areas of inquiry not previously explored in the current body of scholarly research about Australian broadsheet's investigative journalism and their role informing the public sphere and providing democratic accountability. The operational definition of investigative journalism was carefully constructed using the available literature and research about investigative journalism.

To answer the research questions four methods were employed, which together form this thesis' research design. Triangulation of the four methods was preferred to selecting a single method because it allowed for greater opportunity to address all of the research questions. Also, while each method had its advantages, neither content analyses nor interviews alone, could address every research question. In total, the collection and processing of data took approximately 870 hours. Together, the qualitative and quantitative methods were designed for a thorough interrogation of the research questions, from varying perspectives, to satisfy the aim of this thesis.

Before concluding, a brief word about the results chapters that follow. There are four chapters and they are constructed to each answer at least one of the research questions. The findings from each method are utilised throughout each chapter. This is done to optimise the triangulation process, and to provide coherence and comprehensiveness to the results about broadsheets' contribution to investigative journalism over the decades.
CHAPTER FIVE

The Role and Quantity of Broadsheets' Investigative Journalism

Introduction

This chapter addresses two of the five research questions. These questions relate to the quantity of investigative journalism that Australian broadsheets have produced for the public sphere, specifically: What is the relationship between falling circulations and revenues of Australian broadsheet newspapers and the quantity of investigative journalism stories? Have Australian broadsheets contributed significantly to the pool of investigative journalism in the public sphere?

This chapter is divided into six sections. Each section provides qualitative and quantitative information to address the following topics: the quantity of investigative journalism provided to the public sphere by Australian mastheads, particularly broadsheets; the decades that have been most plentiful for print investigative journalism; and the relationship between the quantity of investigative journalism and the long-term circulation trend of newspapers. It will also examine the newspapers that have produced the most investigative journalism; and which newspaper proprietors, between the duopoly of Fairfax and News Limited, have produced the most Walkley Awarded investigative journalism. Finally, it will examine how print media's contribution to investigative journalism compares to that of other media such as broadcast and online, within the limits of the study. These are important questions because the scholarly literature suggests that newsrooms have altered reporting priorities and are producing fewer investigative stories in response to falling print circulations and advertising revenues. The empirical data will also test the assumption that broadsheets produce more

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investigative journalism than tabloids, and the assumption, at least in quantitative terms, that the 1980s was the 'golden era' for investigative journalism in Australia.²

**The Quantity of Investigative Journalism**

There is a perception in both journalism and academic works that, across the Australian media, there are fewer investigative stories now, than in the past.³ The data contradicts this view. A content analysis of the Walkley Awards and a longitudinal study of selected broadsheets reveal that more stories are meeting the definition of investigative reporting than ever before. The two data sets are independent of one another, yet both trend upward over the years, peaking in the first decade of the new millennium.

The longitudinal study, also referred to as the broadsheet study, examined more than 21,100 news pages of selected broadsheet mastheads and logged details for 1243 newspaper pages from the prominent right-hand news pages (pages one, three and five) and other pages that had an example of investigative journalism. By identifying and counting incidences of investigative journalism, this study found that each sampled month recorded an increase in the amount of investigative journalism compared to the same month from the previous decade. This continued until the peak of 2001 — with a total of 16 investigative stories recorded in the 2001 analysis. In 2011 the total number for the month fell slightly to 13 (see Figure 5.1). It is also worth noting that the *National Times* ceased publication in 1987, and yet the volume of investigative stories, even with one fewer masthead in the data set, continued to increase.

This result is also consistent with, and independent of, the decade-by-decade analysis of the selected Walkley Award categories, as illustrated in Figure 5.2. It also showed that the number of investigative journalism print stories (both tabloid and broadsheet) that pass the operative definition increased over time. While the Walkley awards cannot be a pure indicator of quantity, this does suggest that more stories, judged by their peers to be exceptional, were investigative stories.

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4 The Walkley data for 2010 and 2011 is excluded because it was not a complete decade and therefore made comparisons with the other decades less useful.
Figure 5.2: Amount of Newspaper Investigative Journalism Winning Walkley Awards, 1950s-2000s

Walkley awards: print investigative journalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>No. of Stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950s*</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author  *incomplete decade, as Walkley awards began in 1956
Note: n=101

A further overview of the Walkley data for each decade shows that, understandably, as more entries were included in the Awards more winning stories would be available for analysis, as every category has at least one winner (with few exceptions when a winner could not be decided and the honour was left unfilled, or when there were joint winners). Thus, the question then is: with more winning entries available to analyse in each decade, does this skew results in favour of finding more investigative journalism as the years progress? In order to adjust for the increase in story winners, the investigative stories that won awards in each decade were expressed as a percentage of the total number of entries for that decade. This allowed for the number of stories that passed the test for investigative journalism to be more directly compared across the decades. This enabled peak years for the quantum of investigative journalism to be identified.

The Most Prolific Decades for Print Investigative Journalism

The result of this percentage comparison was that two 'golden periods' emerged — the 1970s and the 2000s (see Figure 5.3). For example, in the 1970s, two-thirds (67%) of award-winning stories also qualified as investigative journalism. In the 2000s, three fifths (60%) of

\[ \text{Note: } n=101 \]

5 Five inaugural categories in 1956 swelled to 34 categories by 2011.
the winning stories were investigative journalism in accordance with the definition used here. It should be noted that a specific 'Investigative Journalism' award category did not appear in the Walkleys until 1991, and it was not an 'All Media' category until 1997. In the 21 years that this category has been available, print has won it 15 times, and remarkably every print story that has won also was considered investigative journalism as defined in this study. All except two winning stories originated from broadsheets, highlighting the role of that particular medium in producing award-winning investigative journalism.

Figure 5.3: Golden Eras for Print Award-Winning Investigative Journalism, 1956-2011

The results show that the 1980s was not the peak 'golden era' for print investigative journalism, at least in terms of the quantity of peer-reviewed award-winning print stories, as is sometimes said. However, it was this period (from 1978) when non-print journalism

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6 Winning stories were blindly tested for 'investigative journalism' without the author identifying beforehand the particular Walkley category to which they belonged. This ensured that stories that won the 'investigative' Walkley category were not favored inadvertently when tested to see whether or not the story possessed the hallmarks of investigative journalism.

became eligible to enter the Walkley Awards. Television and radio produced some high-profile award-winning investigative stories. Examples include Chris Masters and Bruce Belsham's 1985 Gold Walkley for their *Four Corners* investigation into the sinking of the Greenpeace ship the Rainbow Warrior in Auckland's harbour after an onboard explosion. Their story exposed that the French secret service had committed an act of terrorism, which killed a Greenpeace photographer. Similarly, Dr Norman Swan's ABC radio investigation won the 1988 Gold Walkley for exposing the fraudulent medical research of Dr William McBride (unrelated to McBride's famous work linking the morning sickness drug thalidomide to birth deformities). Dr McBride was deregistered as a consequence of Swan's investigation. There are many high-profile non-print investigative journalism examples in this decade that might explain the perception that the 1980s was a 'golden era' for investigative reporting. The point here is that it was not a 'golden era' for print in terms of quantity.

**Quantity of Print Investigations Versus Circulation decline**

In Chapter Two it was established that circulations and revenues of broadsheets had fallen since the early 1990s. The peak of circulation was the 1980s for some broadsheets and a decade earlier for some Australian tabloids. The slump has varied from masthead to masthead. For example, *The Australian* was successful in regaining some of its paid audience share after the 1990s, but since then its circulation has largely plateaued during the 2000s.

Since the late 1980s when paid circulations and revenues were decreasing, the results here demonstrate that the quantity of investigative stories was increasing despite newspapers' circulation falls. The results also found that most of the investigative reporting from the 1980s until the end of the 2000s came from broadsheets — 6 investigative tabloid Walkley winners compared to 48 investigative broadsheet Walkley winners during these decades. No positive correlation was found between broadsheet circulation decline and their capacity to produce investigative journalism. Rather, against earlier predictions in the introductory chapter, the illustrative results suggest the opposite — an inverse relationship between falling

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newspaper circulations and the amount of investigative reporting in the public sphere, at least until the end of the 2000s (see Figure 5.4).

**Figure 5.4: Newspaper Penetration Versus Award-Winning Investigative Journalism, 1980s-2000s**

Circulation vs investigative journalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1980s</th>
<th>1990s</th>
<th>2000s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author; Audit Bureau of Circulations* ⁹

Therefore, in answer to the first research question: What is the relationship between falling circulations and revenues of Australian broadsheet newspapers and the quantity of investigative journalism stories? The results show that, as circulations and revenues of Australian newspapers have fallen, the amount of investigative journalism from broadsheet newspapers has not. This finding is contrary to many of the opinions in the academic literature about newspaper investigative journalism in developed nations. For example, Bob Franklin argued that in order to sustain newspapers profitability as masthead circulations and revenues fell, newsrooms altered their reporting priorities. The first of these priority shifts that he identified in the UK was that: 'newspapers seem less concerned to report news, especially ... investigative stories'. ¹⁰ He is one of many academics and media commentators

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with this view, including this author at the outset of this project. The underlying factor that might explain the persistence of this view could be that investigative journalism does not have the impact that it once did, such as in the 1980s. The data shows that there is more print investigative journalism in the public sphere in the 2000s, but audiences might not be as aware of it because fewer Australians read print newspapers compared to the 1970s and early 1980s when circulations peaked. Newspapers no longer occupy such a central role in the media landscape, as Tiffen identified. Further, the online audience for news has grown, but it is also true that there are more stories in the public sphere, and in a much faster news cycle, competing for readers' attention. Thus, the constant churn of stories might mean that investigative journalism isn't as noticeable and can get lost unless other media follow up the stories persistently, and that the masthead that originally broke the story updates and revisits it to increase its prominence and audience impact.

Australian journalists interviewed for this thesis had a range of views about the state of investigative journalism in 2011. Some believed that investigative journalism in Australia had withstood peaks and troughs. Others believed there were fewer investigative stories now than in the past. Private Media's Eric Beecher and Channel Seven's investigative journalist Ross Coulthart both argued that there are still golden opportunities for it now.

I am loving the profession of journalism more now more than I did when I started when I was 22 years old, and the interesting thing is it’s because of this new media. There is an audience out there that does like good yarns, and the thing that I have really only realised in the last year or two is how to reach that audience and how to engage with them. I don’t think we are at the end of the road for investigative journalism, but I do think the delivery model is the problem, and we are in that transition period. But I have no doubt that in 25, 30 years, if I am still around, I will still be making investigative journalism.

13 Coulthart, R. 'Interview with the author,' 28 December 2011.
Similarly, Australian print and television investigative journalist Marian Wilkinson said:

For journalists, the change in gathering information since those early years has been revolutionary. The Internet and the access to searchable information online has sped up the work of investigative journalism and broadened the sources. But despite this, it is amazing that crucial breaks in stories still come from word of mouth. In this sense there is little doubt that human sources are still vital to uncovering what people in power don't want you to know. And looking back on many of the big stories whether on police or political corruption or the abuse of power from Vietnam to Iraq the willingness of a whistleblower to talk to a journalist is essential to serious investigative reporting. What stuns me still is when we read the subsequent reports of judicial inquiries into these abuses we learn that as journalists we only envisaged a fraction of what was really going on.¹⁴

_The Age’s_ national editor who oversaw Fairfax Media's investigative unit, Mark Baker, revealed his organisation had concertedly invested extra money and resources into investigative journalism in 2011 because it was considered a unique source of news of value. Baker's words reflect the views discussed earlier of Philip Meyer. Barker stated: ‘What is going to sell in the future is the product of investigative journalism. So, we need to do more of it and not less, and it is by developing that high end content that nobody else has, that is what will continue to persuade people to buy you.’ Baker argued that, ‘news is a universal commodity now, everybody has it and everybody gets it for nothing, it is highly competitive ... but where we want to make money is on the strength and credibility of our investigative journalism’.¹⁵ Consequently, Baker identified 2011 and beyond as a golden time for Fairfax's investigative journalism.

I do think investigative journalism at _The Age_ is as strong as it has ever been. It is not just in terms of the numerical budget, but it is the output, the quality, the standards, and the impact of what we are doing is bigger and better than ever. I am fully mindful over the last few decades that _The Age_ has had some really big huge periods in terms of investigative journalism periods where we have broken some colossal stories, but I do think where we are at the moment is a golden era of it for us.¹⁶

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¹⁴ Wilkinson, M. 'Interview with the author,' 30 January 2012.
¹⁵ Baker, M. 'Interview with the author,' 11 January 2012.
¹⁶ Ibid.
Veteran investigative reporter Evan Whitton queries whether investigative journalists are able to join the dots as they once did and identify patterns of corruption in society. This might be one reason why the perception that print investigative journalism is diminishing is at odds with the findings of this research. The investigative stories generally move from topic to topic and are fragmented and disconnected, rather than coming together to form an overriding narrative or pattern, which readers can identify. However, Whitton does acknowledge the opinion of his former editor and founder of the National Times, Vic Carroll, who argued that today's (2012) newspaper editors understood and valued investigative journalism.
Whitton stated:

I'm not sure there is much pattern stuff around these days. Perhaps there is and I have missed it. As Vic Carroll says print publishers have apparently realised their future depends to some extent on investigative/explainer journalism.17

Similarly to Baker and Meyer, Whitton's and Carroll's perspectives suggest that in an era where news is ubiquitous and largely free online, on the radio and free-to-air television, newspapers that seek to 'monetarise' news require unique information that other media outlets cannot produce. They see that investigative journalism can fulfill this role.

The Newspapers that Produce the Most Investigative Journalism

Having established that the quantity of broadsheet investigative journalism has increased over time until the end of the 2000s, we can now turn to a different question: which mastheads have made the biggest contributions to investigative journalism? An analysis of all print Walkley winners using the sample population showed that Fairfax's broadsheet newspapers produced the most investigative story winners since 1956. This is consistent with the view that Fairfax has been dominant in providing the Australian public sphere with investigative journalism in the past.18

17 Whitton, E. 'Interview with the author,' 8 February 2012.
The SMH (15 awards) produced the most award-winning investigative journalism from 1956 to 2011, followed by The Age (12) and then, in equal third, The Australian and Fairfax's financial tabloid, the Australian Financial Review (10 each). But, if the mastheads' respective Sunday papers were included, and there is an argument that they should be given that at least in the past two decades they have shared resources and staff, then The Age, (17), sneaks ahead of the SMH (16). Third place remains unchanged and is still held by the AFR (10) and News Limited's only broadsheet, The Australian (10).

Of all the mastheads analysed, SMH's award-winning journalism (65%) most often fulfilled the definition of investigative journalism used here, compared to other mastheads: The Age (52%), AFR (52%), Australian (52%), with the exception of the Courier Mail (82%) — but crucially, only when it was still a broadsheet, prior to 2006.

Moving on to compare the results of the Walkley analysis to the independent broadsheet longitudinal study, the order of table leaders was the same (as for when the Sunday publications were counted separately). Of course, the broadsheet study largely excludes the tabloids, including the financial tabloid the AFR. To demonstrate the results graphically, a simple way to do this was to reverse the 'x' and 'y' axes of Figure 5.1. This then shows each newspaper's individual contribution to investigative journalism for each decade. The results were: SMH (17), just ahead of The Age (15), followed by The Australian (8). Again, it should be noted that the National Times ceased publishing in the late 1980s, and therefore is not recorded here beyond 1981 (see Figure 5.5).
Investigative Journalism of Individual Mastheads in Each Decade

A much deeper understanding of the character of investigative journalism is gained when each decade is analysed separately. Beginning with the study of Walkley Award winners, and starting in the 1950s, it is worth noting that an evening broadsheet newspaper, the Melbourne Herald, which closed after 150 years of publishing in 1990 (signalling the end for Australian evening newspapers) was the 1950s standout for award-winning investigative journalism. The longitudinal study did not examine the Herald's contribution in the 1950s, because the content analysis started at 1971.

The Melbourne Herald's investigative journalism was awarded Walkley awards in 1957 and 1958 for 'Best Piece of Newspaper Reporting'. Both stories had a human interest focus. The 1957 story written by police reporter Lionel Hogg was an investigative story that did what the police were unable to do at the time and track down a missing Ukrainian stewardess who deserted her ship whilst it was docked in Melbourne for the 1956 Olympic games. In Hogg's four-part series, the stewardess Nina Paranyuk tells how tough life was in the Baltic state, particularly during the Cold War, and how she had little faith in anything other than God when she was living in the Ukraine. What is instructive here is that the news cycle was much slower than 2012, newspaper penetration of the population was much greater, and a four-part
series was not uncommon. These factors assisted investigative stories to reach a wide
audience, and to have an impact on that audience. This suggests an investigative story was
accorded more prominence, more emphasis and was able to stay in the public consciousness
for longer. Hogg used his extensive contacts to find Paranyuk who was being accommodated
in three safe houses across Melbourne during her two months on the run from authorities.
The series began with Paranyuk telling Hogg:

   Ever since Stalin ordered the demolition of our tiny stone Church, I have prayed for somebody
   or something to take me away from the USSR. That was 24 years ago. I was only 10. I had to
   wait a long time before my prayers were answered.\textsuperscript{19}

Consequently, following the series, Paranyuk was granted asylum in Australia. The other
\textit{Herald} winner for 1958 was Douglas Lockwood who sought and found an indigenous
Western Australian girl, 15-year-old Ruth Daylight. Months earlier Ruth had made national
headlines after leaving her community in Halls Creek to travel to Canberra to visit the Queen
Mother. Lockwood contrasts her regal accommodation in Canberra with the 'filthy hovel,
only 3 ft high, where Ruth lives with her mother and four other Daylight children'.\textsuperscript{20} The story
examines the poor living conditions of indigenous Australians. The social outcome of the
story is unknown, other than obviously raising awareness about the disparity between
indigenous and white Australians' conditions. Both 1950s stories used a case study to
highlight social welfare issues domestically and abroad, and as such provide a sense of the
style of story-telling in this era.

In the 1960s, and consistent with the analysis of David McKnight,\textsuperscript{21} it was tabloids, renowned
for their 'muckraking', that dominated the Walkley Awards. In the twentieth century, the
transition from single-issue muckraking to systemic investigative reporting was interrupted
by a period of complacency towards investigative reporting during the Cold War years. At
this time, the mass media in Australia, as in Europe and the USA, had become largely

\textsuperscript{20} Lockwood, D. 'Now Ruth is Back in Native Hovel' \textit{Herald}, [day and month not recorded in archive] 1958,
page not recorded.
\textsuperscript{21} McKnight, D. 'The Investigative Tradition in Australian Journalism 1945-1965,' 1999.
complicit with anti-Communism as the organising principle of a broader cultural Cold War.\textsuperscript{22} There were exceptions, and they included labour movement publications such as the Australian Workers' Union publication \textit{The Worker}.\textsuperscript{23} The collaborating relationship between the press and the political establishment only started to pull apart as social and political movements gained strength, including feminism and Vietnam War protests. Says Whitton: 'Organs of the media did not tell the customer what was really going on until relatively recently.'\textsuperscript{24}

By 1965, the editor-in-chief of the \textit{Courier Mail}, Sir Theodore Bray, spoke about the press and its responsibilities, signalling a revival of the press in its role as the Fourth Estate:

\begin{quote}
I would maintain that to be the Fourth Estate is still one of the main functions of the press ... It has also to be a watchdog of civil liberties and a protector against the petty tyranny of bureaucrats and all those clothed with or assuming authority against the common man ... Newspapers clearly have a function beyond mere reporting and recording — a function of probing behind the straight news, of interpreting and explaining and sometimes of exposing.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

In this period, newspapers like the \textit{Truth} — its circulation exceeding 400,000 — were breaking important 'big target' stories that prefigured the second wave of systemic-issue investigative journalism that occurred more frequently in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Walkley results show that it was the weekend and weekly tabloids that were leading other print news outlets in producing investigative journalism. They had a longer deadline to investigate agenda-setting stories. The Sydney \textit{Sunday Telegraph} was the most successful, at least in terms of quantitative data, during this decade. This is the only decade where the tabloids produced more investigative winners than the broadsheets. Other than the longer deadline, this might be explained because of the tabloids' history of irreverent reporting and exposure journalism. It was not until the 1970s, before systemic investigative reporting came

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{22} McKnight, D. "'Not Attributable to Official Sources': Counter-Propaganda and the Mass Media,' \textit{Media International Australia, Incorporating Culture & Policy}, vol. 128, Aug., 2008: pp. 5-17.
  \item\textsuperscript{23} Suich, M. cited in Whitton, E. 'Interview with the author,' 8 February 2012.
  \item\textsuperscript{24} Whitton, E. 'Interview with the author,' 8 February 2012.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
to vogue and was favoured by broadsheets. *The Age's* editor Graham Perkin (1966 to 1975) imported the idea of the specialist print investigative unit after visiting London's *Sunday Times*. Before then, *The Age* was not resourced to engage in this form of journalism.

Of the nine investigative stories identified in the sample from the 1960s, the majority was about international issues, followed by stories about indigenous affairs. For example, the stories ranged from a five-part series on conditions in Queensland public hospitals; a first hand narrative about a journalist trying to live on the pension, and a feature on rampant kangaroo culling. The international stories included series about: apartheid in South Africa; the future of the two New Guineas; and the consequences of the Vietnam War on the North Vietnamese. There were also two award-winning stories on indigenous living conditions in outback Australia; and the police rescue of 16 sailors stranded for three days on the Greek freighter *Tanais* in Western Australia.

By the 1970s, investigative journalism was in fashion for several reasons, including the glamourisation of Watergate in the United States. Former tabloid and broadsheet editor Bruce Guthrie cited the maverick editorship of *The Age*’s Graham Perkin as another factor in the rise of investigative journalism in local newsrooms with the development of the investigative team 'Insight'. This period also heralded the start of university graduates choosing journalism as a career, as opposed to it being previously considered as a craft. Walkley-winning investigative journalist Paul Robinson, one of the first university graduates entering journalism with a politics degree, explained:

I was part of a changing world that rebelled against the Vietnam War, was suspicious of authority and contemptuous of the strict morality of past generations. Journalism was the job

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29 Guthrie, B. 'Interview with the author,' 11 February 2010.
of a lifetime. It presented the opportunity to challenge authority, to be close to the decision making process and a chance to play a critical part in political life.\textsuperscript{30}

The Walkley analysis findings for this period show the overall number of awards, and the number of investigative journalism stories, were split marginally in favour of broadsheets in the 1970s. But the greatest number of investigative journalism pieces from individual mastheads came from the \textit{West Australian} (4) and the now defunct weekly national tabloid turned broadsheet, the \textit{National Times}. The \textit{National Times} won four consecutive awards for 'Best Newspaper Feature' in 1975, 1976, 1977 and 1978.

The broadsheet content analysis shows \textit{National Times}' stories in the 1970s were typically about the arts, federal politics, health, education, industrial relations, business and international issues. Business, and industrial relations dominated page one in the early days. \textit{National Times} was unusual compared to newspapers of the era, particularly as a tabloid-sized masthead, in that it readily engaged in commentary and feature writing. Often its stories extended beyond 100 column inches, or 3500 words. The other papers at the time reported news 'straight' according to the rules of the inverse triangle, answering the questions of 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when' before finishing the story with quotes and background facts. The \textit{National Times} did not follow this formula. It experimented with feature writing styles, some of its stories filling several pages, extending beyond 10,000 words.

The broadsheet study did not detect investigative reporting from the \textit{National Times} in 1971, but this might be because the paper had only begun publishing two months earlier, in February. The qualitative analysis here showed that the \textit{National Times} (founded by Vic Carroll and edited by Trevor Kennedy) cost 20 cents for the weekly tabloid edition, and it was 48 pages. In comparison, \textit{The Age} cost six cents for a daily edition, was a similar size with 14 pages of news, including dedicated politics pages beyond page six.

In the \textit{National Times} there were no advertisements on page one, and photographs were kept to less than 15 per cent of the page. Often there was just one story on page one and a journalist's byline was used sparingly, usually for the 'big splash' stories running over several

\textsuperscript{30} Robinson, P. 'Interview with the author,' 20 January 2012.
pages. The front page promoted its inside stories down the left-hand column and bottom banner. A full-page advertisement typically ran on page six. Except for page one, the major news pages of three and five carried only one advertisement, usually for either wine or cigarettes, and it covered a quarter of the page. Page five was usually dedicated to international issues. *The Age* also used bylines sparingly. There were many stories and pictures were small on the news pages. Full-page advertising did not appear until the last news pages, and advertisers tended to be for local products and companies, rather than national or international brands.

In the 1970s, the Walkley analysis established that the *National Times*’ winning stories were: a three-part series about Vietnam (Evan Whitton), a profile on Bob Hawke (Craig McGregor), the collapse of an old Australian commodities trading company the Gollin group (Robert Gottliebsen) and an inside account on a riot where guards attacked prisoners at Sydney's Long Bay jail (Anne Summers).31 All but the Hawke profile passed the definition of investigative journalism applied here. Gottliebsen and Whitton's stories scored perfect 10s, and were green stories using the traffic light scale. Summers' was also a green zone story (see Chapter Four: Research Design.) with a score of 9. Unusual for the era, *The National Times* supported female reporters and had many pioneering Australian investigative journalists among its staff, including Marian Wilkinson, Anne Summers, Wendy Bacon, Deborah Snow and Adele Horin.

As mentioned, the *West Australian* was also prominent in investigative journalism in the 1970s. This was almost single-handedly because of a young journalist named Catherine Martin. She wrote medical stories for the paper and investigated the use of the now disreputable Tronado microwave machine, used then to treat cancer.32 It earned her the 1975 Walkley for 'Best Piece of Reporting for the Year'. The story passed with a seven in the amber zone. Two years earlier Martin had won a Walkley for the paper after a two-week expedition reporting a feature series about the health conditions of indigenous Australians,

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and observing how bush nurses coped with treating diseases and malnourishment. Martin's most awarded investigative series in 1978 was an exposé into the deadly effects of blue asbestos on mining workers' health, and the high incidence of lung disease of exposed workers that was being reported abroad. Her final story led to CSR, the owner of WA's blue asbestos mine, establishing the Wittenoom Trust. The fund agreed to provide $2 million over 10 years, but it did not acknowledge legal liability at the time. For this series, Martin won the inaugural Gold Walkley ('Gold Award — Best Piece of Journalism, Newspaper, Television or Radio') and again the Walkley for 'Best Piece of Reporting for the Year'. The series ranked here in the green zone, scoring 10.

By the 1980s, Fairfax was dominating the Walkley awards, producing the most investigative journalism and award-winning journalism. Although The Age's 'Insight' investigative unit had been running 13 years, it did not dominate nationally with its investigative reporting until the 1980s, and, even then, it was a freelancer who won two of its Walkleys in that decade. Freelancer Jan Mayman, won the 1984 Gold Walkley investigating police brutality within a West Australian indigenous community. She exposed the death and cover-up of indigenous youth 16-year-old John Pat who died in police custody at Roebourne. Another Age Walkley winner at this time Michael Gawenda was to later become the paper's editor.

In 1982 Gawenda wrote a controversial series about life within Melbourne's social housing high-rise buildings. He did so from an insiders' view, posing as an occupant, which caused a stir among ethicists for not disclosing his identity at the time. In this way his story was similar to Evan Whitton's award-winning story 'Life on the Pension' mentioned earlier, which won the 1967 Walkley for the Truth newspaper. The 1980s was also the peak for The Age's circulation, with sales of 250,000 copies a day.

36 Mayman, J. 'A Town With Two Names and Two Laws,' The Age, 14 October 1983, page no. not recorded in archive.
All three of Fairfax's major broadsheets of the time passed the investigative test to lead the winners' table in the Walkley analysis for the 1980s. The results were: *The Age* (3), *The SMH* (2) *National Times* (2), followed by the non-Fairfax publications such as New Limited's *Courier Mail* (2) and Time Warner's news magazine *Time Australia* (2). The *Courier Mail* was a broadsheet at this time (until 2006). This means then, that it was broadsheets that dominated the Walkley peer-reviewed investigative journalism in the print sector in the 1980s. Although the longitudinal study does not include tabloids, it also shows (see Figure 5.1) that investigative journalism was distributed relatively evenly across the broadsheets, rather than finding one standout publication.

Following the collapse of the Australian stock market in 1987 and some high-profile business collapses such as Victoria's Pyramid Bank, the 1990s was the start of a renewed interest in investigative business reporting. This became particularly evident at the *AFR* (see Figure 5.6). Overall, however, broadsheets' dominated the 1990s with their investigative reporting. The *Courier Mail* and the weekly *Sunday Age* did the most. Figure 5.6 shows how closely the investigative stories were divided among the broadsheets, just as they were in the 1980s. When the *Adelaide Advertiser* became a tabloid in 1997, like its sister paper, the *Courier Mail* (2006), it stopped producing Walkley winning investigative journalism, as defined here. Similarly, since 1998 when the Fairfax-owned *Newcastle Herald* switched to tabloid it also has not been awarded any Walkleys for investigative journalism as a tabloid, yet as a broadsheet it had produced award-winning investigative journalism, including the coveted Gold Walkley.\footnote{In 1981 journalist John Lewis won the Gold Walkley and 'Best Piece of News Reporting' for his story 'Battle for Control of Newcastle-based Television Company NBN, *Newcastle Herald*, 4 May 1981, no page no. recorded in archive.} It is true that the *Herald* won a Walkley Award for its journalism covering regional and suburban affairs as a tabloid in 2003, but that story did not meet the definition for investigative journalism used here.\footnote{The winning story was Smith, A. 'News — Black Mark,' *Newcastle Herald*, 12 March 2003, p. 1.} This is consistent with Bob Franklin's arguments (discussed in Chapter Three) about the tabloidisation of news; that tabloid journalism tends to retreat from investigative reporting to the preferred territory of 'lighter stories'.\footnote{Franklin B. ed., *Pulling Newspapers Apart: Analysing Print Journalism*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2008, p. 3.}
In the 2000s, Fairfax continued the trend of the previous two decades and produced the most Walkley Award-winning investigative journalism. But, in this decade, so did its financial tabloid, the AFR. For the first time the AFR was on a par with its broadsheet stablemates, The Age and the SMH. The AFR won seven Walkleys, of which five meet the definition of investigative reporting used here. The investigative story topics were evenly divided between individual and corporate corruption. They included a profile by the AFR team on high-flying stockbroker Rene Rivkin and his undisclosed Swiss bank accounts.\(^{42}\) The story won both the 2004 Gold Walkley and 'Business Journalism Award'. The following year, Morgan Mellish wrote a 3500-word profile on Liberal Party donor and multimillionaire businessman Robert Gerard who was investigated by the Australian Tax Office for avoiding tax using an elaborate and fraudulent offshore insurance scheme. During the court battle, Mellish revealed that, rather astonishingly, Gerard did not seem to lose Liberal Party support. Instead Gerard was awarded a medal of the Order of Australia by Prime Minister John Howard and placed on the board of the Reserve Bank for five years.\(^{43}\) The corporate stories focused on shareholders who lost millions following the collapses of financial companies Opes Prime and Storm. The


latter examined the Australian Securities Investment Commission’s failure to act promptly over the collapse of Storm.44

Before moving on to the next section, first an observation about two other trends that become apparent from the data in the most recent decades. The first trend was the increase in syndicating stories across mastheads within the same group. Fairfax began this in the late 1980s and by the 2010s its syndicated award-winning efforts had more than quadrupled (see Figure 5.7). The rise in story sharing coincides with falls in advertising revenues and circulations. What this suggests is an editorial adaptation so that editors can continue to commit resources to investigative journalism through a more centralised editorial approach within the masthead group, rather than to abandon this form of reporting.

**Figure 5.7: Syndication of Walkley Award-winning Stories Within a Masthead Group**

![Graph showing syndication of Walkley Award-winning stories within a masthead group](image)

*Source: Author*

The other trend was print collaborations with outside media organisations. For example, the use of WikiLeaks material as a starting point for investigative stories in Fairfax publications in late 2010. The Age and the ABC also teamed up and gained greater audience share on several stories, most notably the 'Money Makers'. This 2011 Walkley winning story 'The

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Money Makers' by *Age* journalists Richard Baker and Nick McKenzie uncovered Australia's biggest bribery scandal involving the Reserve Bank of Australia's subsidiary currency firms, Note Printing Australia and Securency. Australia's foreign bribery laws were enacted for the first time, charging the firms and local and international senior managers with corruption offences. The stories found bribes were paid to secure bank note making contracts overseas including in Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and Nepal. Three years after the story broke, Reserve Bank Governor Glenn Stevens told a 2012 federal parliamentary committee that his deputy was given written warning of corruption inside the bank's operations in 2007.45

Mark Baker explained the decision to share resources with the ABC:

> I saw it as a good opportunity to raise the profile of the story because we had been plugging away at it for over a year or so, at that stage, and we had had significant impact: the police investigation was under way and all the rest of it. But the story was hard to get traction outside of Victoria and I felt that, and the outcome has vindicated it, that by doing this with the *ABC* we broadened its profile. After *Four Corners* the story got a new lease of life and got a better national profile and we were then able to drive it to new heights, and then of course we saw charges being laid and the story continues to evolve, so it was a good deal.46

Channels Nine and Seven have also partaken infrequently in investigative journalism collaborations with newspaper journalists. Here, the longitudinal data shows that of the 326 individual newspaper pages analysed for 2011, nine stories involved collaborations with an outside media organisation; one of these collaborations (albeit an informal one) was investigative reporting as defined here between *WikiLeaks* and Fairfax: 'Hicks had leadership qualities US feared'.47 Another investigative story was an in-house collaboration at Fairfax: 'Murdered by death squad'.48 This suggests that the preeminence of the press has declined compared to its influence in the last century,49 and it requires the use of other media, or access to a national audience, to reach a wide audience if a bigger story impact is desired.

46 Baker, M. 'Interview with the author,' 11 January 2012.
Tabloid Versus Broadsheet: Does Size Make a Difference?

In one sense, it is not surprising that Australian broadsheets produce more Walkley Award-winning investigative journalism than tabloids. According to Franklin, Sparks, Dahlgren and others, tabloids are more interested in content that is enjoyable and entertaining, with 'a greater stress on the personal and private at the expense of the public and structural', as Sparks argues. As noted above, Fairfax's broadsheets have dominated the public sphere in producing Walkley Award-winning investigative journalism in the past three decades. The longitudinal study was specifically designed to analyse the content of broadsheets, and thus this research instrument was unavailable for addressing the question of the relationship between the masthead format and its quantity of investigative journalism. However, the Walkley Award data was useful for this purpose. It showed Australian broadsheets had contributed more peer-reviewed investigative journalism to the public sphere than any other medium.

For example, in the selected sample, the print Walkley Award winners totalled 187 stories; and 111 of these stories were from broadsheets. Of those 187 winners that passed the operational definition of investigative journalism (101 stories), the majority of these stories were from broadsheets (67). This means of the 101 stories that qualified as investigative reporting, 66.3% were published in broadsheet mastheads. In comparison, Australian tabloid newspapers accounted for 29.7% of investigative Walkley winners, (see Figure 5.8).

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Applying a statistical tool, the two-tailed Fisher's exact test,\textsuperscript{51} to determine the statistical significance of this finding in relation to its sample size, the test showed the difference between the tabloid and broadsheet result had a p value of less than 0.0001. In other words, there was a 99.99\% likelihood this result has statistical significance. This test shows that Australian broadsheets produce more investigative journalism than tabloids, using the methodologies of this thesis.

**Fairfax Media Versus News Limited**

The Walkley Award data selected for analysis shows that Fairfax has won more Walkleys than any other print media organisation in the country since the awards began. Fairfax has collected 96 Walkleys, compared to News Limited's 64. Of course, Fairfax did not buy shares in *The Age* until 1966, but for the purposes here *The Age* is considered a Fairfax masthead.\textsuperscript{52} The remaining 27 selected awards over this period were divided among smaller media organisations. Exactly half of News Limited's awards pass the operative definition for

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{52} In 1966, Fairfax acquired a minority stake in the paper owned by David Syme and Co, and in 1972 Fairfax bought a controlling interest. It bought out remaining shares in 1983.
\end{footnotesize}
investigative journalism. Fairfax is slightly higher with 53 per cent of its award-winning stories passing the investigative journalism definition. However, former Chief Executive Officer of News Limited, John Hartigan, complained that the Walkley Awards were biased in favour of 'elites', citing Fairfax and the ABC. Consequently, he created News Limited's the 'News Awards' in 2005. When Hartigan was awarded the Walkley's Journalistic Leadership prize in 2008, he quipped that the judging panel perhaps got it right this time.\textsuperscript{53} However, News Limited still enters the awards and its journalists and executives attend them. The CEO Kim Williams publically praises News Limited journalists when they are successful in their Walkley categories. The thesis research suggests that Fairfax does more investigative journalism than News Limited and it is not unpredicted that it therefore wins more Walkley awards for it.

**How Newspaper Investigative Journalism Compares to Other Media**

This study found that there is a perception among media professionals that print media does more investigative journalism than any other media. More than half of the twenty-two media practitioners and professionals interviewed nominated print media as most likely to produce more investigative journalism than any other medium. None of the interviewees nominated radio as a preferred medium for investigative journalism. The Australian's Hedley Thomas summed up a general view espoused by interviewees about radio investigative journalism: 'Radio is at the greatest disadvantage. You can't see it, and you know it just feels too fleeting on radio. I guess now people can listen with a podcast but ... they [radio journalists] seem to be worse off in terms of recognition for it.'\textsuperscript{54}

In the interviews, general comments about how newspapers employ more journalists than any other media organisations in Australia, and how newspapers have fewer logistical hurdles than television, were repeated reasons for a favourable perception of print producing the most investigative journalism. Interestingly, when an investigative journalist had experience working in television, their perception was that the print media might produce more stories, but television enjoyed greater public impact. For example, ABC Media Watch host and a

\textsuperscript{54} Thomas, H. 'Interview with the author,' 18 July 2012.
former investigative journalist and executive producer of *Four Corners*, Jonathan Holmes, summed it up this way:

> On the face of it, it is a lot easier to do [investigative journalism] with newspapers. Because the unnamed sources are a lot more useful to a newspaper journalist. ... It is ok to say a source close to the subject and people will accept it, but they won't really accept it on television, it is much rarer. So in that sense it's easier to do in newspapers ... Newspapers should find it easier and should do more of it than television. Plus, apart from anything else it is cheaper because you only have one or two people doing it.\(^5^5\)

Holmes identified two distinct advantages that television has over print as a medium for investigative journalism:

> One, its lead times are long anyway, the sheer mechanics of shooting and editing, mean that to do a long program like *Four Corners* takes you weeks, and even short form programs like *7.30* takes several days to a week. Within that time is the opportunity to do a lot of research even if you have not been given an extended deadline.

> The second advantage is the sheer impact of the story if you do get it; it is vastly greater on television. The tears on television — if you look at the cattle story *Four Corners* did last year, that is obviously a television story — if you tried to do that in a newspaper, with the odd still, it would not have had a tenth the impact. Even stories that aren't that visual, when they are on television they just seem to have more impact.\(^5^6\)

Holmes' assessment of television investigative journalism, is useful for understanding the enduring notion that the 1980s was a peak for investigative journalism, as there were some high-profile television investigative reports during this era. Some had significant audience impact with significant outcomes such as Queensland's Fitzgerald inquiry following Chris Master's *Four Corner's* investigation, the 'Moonlight State', which also coincided with Phil Dickie's newspaper reporting about the same issues for the *Courier Mail*. However, Masters still argued that:

\(^5^5\) Holmes, J. 'Interview with the author,' 19 December 2011.
\(^5^6\) Ibid.
Newspapers are better suited to investigative journalists, because you don't have a whole range of problems when it comes to identifying sources, even forming the narrative and the speed at what you can do the work. If I come upon a good story and I want to get it out there as quickly as I can, I am much better off working for a newspaper.\(^\text{57}\)

However, Masters, like Holmes, stated that if journalists were seeking maximum public impact, no medium beats television:

I have certainly found that for a piece to work television does a much better job, even though it is much harder to make the piece for television. The fact is obviously you are reaching a much bigger audience, and newspaper audiences are shrinking. I see fantastic stories being printed on the front page of The Age, or whatever, and going nowhere, absolutely nowhere, you know they are dead the next day and you really have to wonder why that is? And so I think that television does a better job of introducing the subject to the public and maybe it is because you can get to know the characters a bit better and maybe you care a bit more about it. But the record of television investigative journalism, even though it fights with both hands tied behind its back, to me has done a hell of a lot better than newspapers in the last 20 years or so.\(^\text{58}\)

Masters' and Holmes' view supports the finding that newspapers are collaborating with television to expand their audience reach and the impact of their investigative journalism.

None of the 22 Australian interviewees considered exclusive online media outlets, without the financial support of hardcopy resources, as producing more investigative journalism than other media at the time of publishing.

This study confirmed the perception that print does contribute significantly to investigative reporting, at least in terms of the quantity of award-winning reporting. This study did not seek to measure the contributions to investigative reporting from radio or television beyond the peer-reviewed Walkley Awards. However, these awards were a good measure of peer-reviewed journalism and can therefore tell us that, when each of the different media compete

\(^{57}\) Masters, C. 'Interview with the author,' 15 February 2011.
\(^{58}\) Ibid.
in the same categories open to all media, print has dominated the awards with its investigative reporting.

The Walkley Award content analysis found that newspapers won more awards, 59%, in the study's selected Walkley categories than any other media. This occurred when the analysis was broadened to determine the winning contributions of all media — newspapers, radio, online, wire services, magazines and television — in categories where they compete against each other for the same award. However, it must be noted that 'All Media' categories were not introduced until 1978, beginning with the Gold Walkley. After print, television had the second highest contribution with 29%; online came third with 7%; radio next with 3%, and wire services and magazines last with 1% (see Figure 5.9.)

**Figure 5.9: Which Medium Produces the Most Walkley Award-winning Journalism?**

![Investigative journalism winners in the 'All Media' categories 1978-2011](image)

*Source: Author*

Print investigative journalism outstripped other media in every decade in which non-print media were able to compete with print in the 'All Media' categories. Further, the online sphere has been only eligible to receive Walkley Awards for its journalism that might be investigative since 1997. Of the online winners it was almost entirely the traditional print media that produced it, with the exception of the ABC, which won a Walkley for its online
coverage in 2002 with its story called 'The Timber Mafia'. This story was not assessed as to whether it met the investigative journalism definition used here.

Online journalism is an important topic because often it is regarded as the potential future of journalism and importantly here the future for investigative journalism in an era of print newspaper revenue decline. But, as academics such as Rod Tiffen have argued, media commentators should not be complacent about the demise of print newspapers. He argued, as cited in O'Donnell et al., that print newspapers were the 'biggest diggers for news', and that: 'online newspapers will be smaller operations, with reduced advertising revenues, and this means a likely decline in the flow and quality of informational content, with diversity limited to opinion rather than original content creation'. As shown here, the Walkley analysis up until 2011 supported the view that newspapers were still the biggest 'diggers for news' in terms of investigative reporting. It has also been demonstrated through the Walkley Awards analysis that online news gathering, independent of traditional media has yet to prove that it can produce award-winning investigative journalism in its own right in Australia. However, the Walkley analysis is just one measure of the investigative output in the Australian online sphere. Another measure is discussed in the next section.

Investigative Journalism in the Online Sphere

A small online study, the last of the methods employed for this thesis, replicated the methodology of the other content analyses. It analysed all content of three news websites in April 2011: Crikey, New Matilda and WikiLeaks (see Figure 5.10).

The number of original investigative stories (excluding follow-up investigative stories on the same topic) identified in a month was similar to the numbers being recorded for the print mastheads in the 1971 and 1981 analyses. This might reflect the nascent character of the online medium for investigative journalism in Australia. The early 1970s and 1980s was also a nascent period for print investigative journalism.

However, in keeping with a very modern trend, three of the four investigative stories in April 2011 were collaborations with outside organisations. The first of two *Crikey* stories was about the number of indigenous deaths in custody. It found that the number of deaths was again rising since the royal commission that investigated the issue 20 years ago. *Crikey* relied on the contribution of a freelance journalist and associate of the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism, Inga Ting, to write this anniversary series.60

*Crikey's* second investigative story analysed the poor English standards of international students enrolled in some Australian journalism schools and compared it to the sector's

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60 Ting, I. 'Why are Deaths in Custody Rising?' *Crikey*, 15 April 2011.
accepted standards. Andrew Crook, an in-house reporter, wrote: 'The kids aren't alright: budding journos struggling with English.\textsuperscript{61}

Collaborators wrote both \textit{New Matilda}'s investigative stories. The first was a NSW election story about a secret online social media campaign said to have breached election funding disclosure rules. Nicole Gooch and Wendy Bacon, both journalists at the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism at the University of Technology in Sydney, wrote this series, 'Keep Carmel.'\textsuperscript{62}

\textit{New Matilda}'s second story involved court cases and digging through national archives to find out more about what the Australian government knew of the killings of the five journalists at Balibo during the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975. 'What We Really Knew About East Timor,' written by academic Dr Clinton Fernandes.\textsuperscript{63}

This again shows that outside collaborations are playing a role in enabling independent online news sites to fund and deliver investigative journalism in Australia. These are collaborations from other organisations that have either specialist knowledge, such as the academic (in this case) or have journalism skills, such as the investigative skills of the Centre for Independent Media. These collaborations go beyond crowd sourcing, of which New York academic Jay Rosen is a key proponent, whereby news outlets enlist citizens to help with reporting and information gathering.\textsuperscript{64} Collaborations go further than crowd sourcing because the information gathering is more formalised using selected partners, with specialist knowledge or skills, to work with journalists or media organisations ('old' or 'new' media). Michael Schudson and Leonard Downie, Jr. of the \textit{Washington Post}, first wrote of this collaborative trend in 2009, calling it the 'reconstruction of American journalism'. They argued that future news gatherers included newsroom journalists, but also freelancers, academics and, in accordance with Rosen, also citizens.\textsuperscript{65} In the online study of this thesis, we can see these

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{BaconGooch2011} Bacon, W. & N. Gooch, 'Who Was Behind 'Keep Carmel'? \textit{New Matilda}, 8 April 2011.
\bibitem{Fernandes2011} Fernandes, C. 'What We Really Knew About East Timor,' \textit{New Matilda}, 14 April 2011.
\bibitem{Muthukumaraswamy2010} Muthukumaraswamy, K. 'When the Media Meet Crowds of Wisdom,' \textit{Journalism Practice}, vol. 4, no. 1 2010, pp. 48-65, p. 49.
\end{thebibliography}
collaborations are functioning in the Australian media context to bring audiences investigative journalism.

Further, Schudson and Downie argued that a key benefit of collaborations was providing financial support for investigative reporting. Through collaborations newsrooms no longer relied on only advertisers and subscribers to subsidise journalism, but were attaining financial support from 'foundations, individual philanthropists, academic and government budgets, special interests, and voluntary contributions from readers and viewers'. In Chapter Four it was identified that the Australian online news site, The Conversation, was collaborating with academia and government to support Australian journalism, but as of December 2012, not investigative reporting. New Matilda also fits this model and relies on voluntary contributions from readers. Schudson and Downie argued that the Internet and those seizing its 'reach' make news collaborations possible:

This is being done not only by surviving newspapers and commercial television, but by start-up online news organizations, nonprofit investigative reporting projects, public broadcasting stations, university-run news services, community news sites with citizen participation, and bloggers. Even government agencies and activist groups are playing a role. Altogether, they are creating a greater variety of independent reporting missions and even different definitions of news. Reporting is becoming more participatory and collaborative.

Returning to the online study here, it can be seen in Figure 5.10 that WikiLeaks' stories did not pass the operative definition in their own right. There is an unresolved question about whether WikiLeaks is investigative journalism or not. On one hand academics Terry Flew and Jason Wilson argue that it is because it reveals information that others want kept hidden. Investigative journalist Evan Whitton argued that, by definition, WikiLeaks is investigative reporting because 'it exposes wrongdoing'. In 2011, the Walkley Board seemed to agree with these assessments and awarded WikiLeaks the prize for most outstanding contribution to

66 Ibid., p. 3.
67 Ibid., p. 2.
69 Whitton, E. 'Interview with the author,' 8 February 2012.
Australian journalism for delivering an ‘avalanche of inconvenient truths’.

But, investigative journalist Ross Coulthart disagreed with characterising WikiLeaks in this way. He maintains that WikiLeaks is a source, rather than investigative journalism: 'I have got very strong views about this and I disagreed with the Walkley [Board] giving Julian Assange a journalism award. I feel very, very strongly that Julian Assange is a source.'

WikiLeaks' stories identified in the analysis were about leaked secret US files confirming Australian Mamdouh Habib was tortured. It had released details of the interrogations of more than 700 suspects at the Guantanamo Bay detention camp including those of fellow Australian David Hicks. Also, it detailed Al Qaeda's arsenal and weapon capabilities. But, without the partnership of mastheads, such as London's Daily Telegraph and Fairfax's The Age, the stories did not meet the mandatory fields belonging to the investigative journalism definition.

However, when the material was shared with collaborating print media, the leaked intelligence information published by WikiLeaks became investigative journalism. This was because The Age added background information for context, and sought interviews with relevant figures to verify facts. Also, mastheads such as The Age were able to do what newspapers do well and filter the mass of leaked information, and repackage it into newsworthy stories for a general audience.

Importantly, Schudson and Downie found that when investigative journalism was pursued collaboratively with an 'institutional authority' (in this case the traditional media with WikiLeaks) it 'guarantees that the work of newsrooms could not be easily ignored'. In other words, institutions are important for producing investigative journalism. They added that these collaborations could also offer support through money, logistics and legal services, and

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71 Coulthart, R. 'Interview with the author,' 28 December 2011.
73 The mandatory fields that failed were evidence of 'active reporting' and evidence of 'time and research' see methodology for more information.
significantly, collaborations heighten audience impact.\textsuperscript{75}

Therefore, at this stage the results of this study indicate that the online sphere is yet to produce enough original investigative journalism to match the offerings of print mastheads (up until 2011). The online news sphere in Australia is producing investigative journalism in small quantities and interestingly, through collaborations. This supports the cited academic literature describing international practices, and suggests here that collaborations are a future funding and newsgathering model for investigative journalism.

\textbf{Conclusion}

This chapter has answered the first research question and found that as circulations and revenues of Australian newspapers have fallen, the amount of print investigative journalism has not. This is contrary to some of the academic and media commentary about the future of newspaper investigative journalism — commentary which appears to conflate the declining circulation of print newspapers and falling advertising revenues, with print funding and editorial resources specifically for investigative journalism. This author also made this assumption at the outset of this research project.

In answer to the second research question of whether Australian broadsheets have contributed significantly to the pool of investigative journalism in the public sphere, the answer is yes, at least in terms of quantity. The 'quality' of this contribution to the Australian public sphere will be analysed in the next chapter.

But this chapter also outlined other research discoveries. Significantly, Australian broadsheets have contributed the most investigative Walkley winning journalism, more so than tabloids. Similarly, Fairfax has contributed more award-winning investigative journalism than any other print or non-print media organisation in the selected categories, in

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
the past 55 years. This is a key finding given its perilous financial position in 2012-13 following a record loss in 2012.⁷⁶

The analyses revealed the main print contributors of investigative journalism for each decade. In summary, the 1950s was the era for the now defunct evening broadsheet the Melbourne Herald. In the 1960s, tabloids dominated, particularly those with a longer deadline, such as the weekend and weekly publications. This was the only decade where tabloids outstripped broadsheets in producing award-winning investigative journalism. Consistent with the literature, the research here showed that 1960s' investigative reporting tended to be about systemic, rather than single-issue stories.

Both the 1970s and the 2000s were identified as peak periods for the amount of investigative journalism produced as a percentage of its award-winning journalism. The 1970s was an in vogue time for investigative journalism following the celebration of the Watergate exposé in the US, the start of tertiary qualifications for journalists, and newsrooms setting up standalone investigative units.

The 1980s was not a peak time for print investigative journalism in terms of quantity. One reason might be that Australia lost an important contributor of investigative journalism, the National Times, during this decade. It was also the beginning of the end of an era for Australia's evening newspapers, such as the Melbourne Herald. But, the 1980s did mark the rise of the broadcast media and its groundbreaking investigative stories, and perhaps the impact of this has contributed to perceptions of this era as a 'golden' period for investigative journalism.

Both the 1980s and the 1990s saw several broadsheets lead the tally board with their contributions of investigative stories. But importantly, broadsheets that converted to a tabloid format during this time no longer were recognised for investigate reporting. This signals an important issue for the future, following Fairfax's announcements in 2012 that it would

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⁷⁶ Fairfax recorded a $2.7 billion loss for the 2011-12 financial year. Revenue fell six per cent on the previous year, and circulation plummeted 15 per cent. Further, Fairfax's largest individual shareholder Australian miner Gina Rinehart is seeking a board seat and has said publically that she does not support the company's charter of editorial independence.
convert its daily broadsheets *The Age* and the *SMH* to tabloid size. Judging by the past, this size shift has altered more than the format but also masthead content, and has witnessed a decline in investigative reporting for those Australian tabloids that made this change.

The 1990s showed the beginnings of the rise of business investigative reporting in niche business publications. This might be in reaction to earlier failings to foresee high-profile company collapses and the crash of the Australian stock market in 1987. Business investigative reporting, namely from the *AFR*, peaked in the 2000s. The *AFR* also had equal number of investigative stories, despite having fewer editorial staff than other dailies, and for the first time was on a par with its broadsheet stable mates, *The Age* and the *SMH* at the top of the investigative reporting leader table.

The in-house sharing of resources, and greater syndication of stories, became more common, particularly for Fairfax during the 1990s and more so in the 2000s and beyond. Importantly, the 2000s marked the beginning of media organisations collaborating with others to produce investigative journalism, also evident in the online sphere. The results here find that *WikiLeaks* can be best viewed as a 'warehouse' for information, which becomes investigative journalism when it collaborates with a 'retailer', such as a traditional print media organisation. A conclusion that *WikiLeaks* founder Julian Assange drew when he had difficulty getting the reach and audience impact he desired initially with the sites' leaked revelations and thus sought collaboration with mainstream print media. Frustrated, Assange wrote to his volunteers:

> *WikiLeaks*’ unreported material is only the most visible wave on an ocean of truth rotting in draws [sic drawers] of the fourth estate, waiting for a lobby to subsidize its revelation into a profitable endeavour.\(^77\)

Finally, the results suggest that the nascent online sphere is not yet able to produce the amount of investigative journalism required if it were to replace the contributions of traditional print media in 2012. The next chapter will consider the difficult question of what is 'quality' investigative journalism. It will examine the relationship between falling

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circulations and revenues of Australian print broadsheet newspapers and identify the effect that this has had on the qualitative features of their investigative journalism.
CHAPTER SIX

Broadsheets and 'Quality' Investigative Journalism

Introduction

Earlier chapters have shown that the traditional print media are at an economic crossroad. Their business model is fractured and their journalism has been decoupled from the monopolistic revenue stream of advertising that once underpinned it. This has particularly affected newspapers. US media academic Philip Meyer calls the tension between maximising profits and providing quality newspapers the 'profit controversy'. He stated that this problem of journalism quality and business success is now an urgent one because profitability is not as certain as it used to be: 'Investors and their advisors tend to focus on short-term financial results, and this puts pressure on newspaper managers to cut back on resources in order to maintain steady earnings growth year to year.' The question here, is how have those cutbacks affected quality investigative journalism?

Thus, this general problem of the profit controversy for news media, journalism and newspapers is also an issue for broadsheets and their investigative journalism. As the previous chapter established, most investigative journalism in Australia has come from broadsheets. It specifically examined the quantity of investigative reporting. The aim of this chapter then, is to examine the relationship between falling circulations and revenues of Australian broadsheet newspapers and the 'quality' of their investigative journalism.

Quality investigative journalism is not easily defined. Quality by its nature can be subjective and relate to different aspects of journalism. Penny O'Donnell, David McKnight and Jonathan Este argued in their research into Australian newspapers in the 21st century\(^2\) that the term has


\(^2\) O'Donnell, P. McKnight D. & J. Este, Journalism at the Speed of Bytes, Sydney: the University of New South Wales, 2012.
different meanings for different stakeholders. For example, newspaper managers might view quality as finding the nexus, sometimes called the 'sweet spot' between commercial success and a well-informed public. Regulators such as the Australian Media and Communications’ Authority (AMCA) place less emphasis on the commercial aspects of the news media and regard quality journalism as reporting that enables access to fair, ethical and accurate information — a resource they claim is fundamental to constructive participation in Australian democracy.³ O’Donnell et al. found that newspaper journalists use the term 'quality journalism' to combine both commercial and public interest concerns: "Quality journalism" [is] shorthand for news content they hope readers will pay for because it is distinctive (value adds) and meets their particular information needs and interests.⁴

Therefore, there is no single measure or agreement on what is 'quality journalism'. This chapter considers views about quality reporting from investigative journalists and media professionals, and compares those views to quantitative and qualitative data about investigative stories to assess how 'quality' broadsheet investigative journalism might have altered over seven decades. The data will also be compared with investigative journalism exclusively found in the online sphere to determine if its online investigative stories have more or less qualitative features than print broadsheets.

Therefore, when identifying 'quality' this chapter will be measuring several features of investigative journalism. These will include: the extent to which a story fulfills the operational definition applied here; whether the story is about a single or systemic-issue in society, and if it is a one-off or story series. These measurements provide insight into the thoroughness of reporting, its depth and its capacity to impact on the audience and ultimately, effect change. 'Impact' will be assessed in two ways. The first will examine mastheads' self-recognition of their investigative stories as demonstrated through the way in which an investigative story is promoted within the pages of its own masthead. Self-promotion is worth examining because in 2013 a story that is heavily promoted is the editor prioritising it for the audience to read — thus, it is a story that the editor believes should impact on readers for whatever reasons, whether commercial, in the name of the 'public good', or something else.

³ Ibid., p. 7.
⁴ Ibid.
This chapter will examine whether self-promotion of a story has always been a priority for mastheads. The other way to measure 'impact' is through discernible societal outcomes (political, legal, economic or social) of a story when it is in the public sphere. These democratic accountability functions of investigative journalism are explored in more detail through case studies in the next chapter. While, it is acknowledged that no single measure would be sufficient to confidently determine the 'quality' of investigative journalism over time, taken together, this chapter aims to identify trends to evaluate investigative journalism's qualitative features since 1956.

**Qualitative Features of Investigative Journalism: By Definition**

In deciding which stories are investigative journalism and which are not, the operational definition codified qualities of investigative journalism — as discussed in the background (Two), and research design (Four) chapters. The more points a story received out of a possible 10, the more qualitative features of investigative journalism. Red stories (0-5 points) failed the mandatory test; amber stories were considered investigative journalism (6-8 points), and green stories had the most qualitative features of investigative journalism (9-10 points). It is important to note that the Walkley Awards, a story cohort used here for analysis, were already subjectively judged for 'quality' using 11 Walkley Awards criteria. These were ethics, newsworthiness, public benefit, originality, research, impact, writing, creative flair, inclusiveness, innovation and production.5

The Walkley data revealed that, overwhelmingly, most stories classified as investigative journalism scored highly and belonged to the green zone (see Figure 6.1). This is to be expected as these stories were judged as the best among peers by peers using the set criteria.

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5 Ibid., p. 38.
It can be seen that the 1950s was the only period where more investigative stories fell into the amber zone rather than the green. The 1980s had the highest ratio of green stories compared to amber (93%), meaning more of the investigative stories in the 1980s had more attributes of investigative journalism as it is defined here. Excerpts of investigative stories will feature in Chapter Seven, but for an example of a green story that scored 10 see Appendix C, which, with the journalist's permission, reproduces one of Nick Mckenzie's 2008 investigative stories (from *The Age* Investigative Unit) that links Victorian racing and a senior jockey to illegal activity involving jailed crime figure Tony Mokbel.\(^6\)

The results of the selected broadsheet mastheads (these stories are not necessarily award-winning examples and represent a more random sample of 'quality' of investigative stories) also show that again it is the 1980s (but also the 1990s) that have the highest ratio of green zone stories (see Figure 6.2).

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The longitudinal study is independent of the Walkley analyses and yet, significantly, Figure 6.3 shows that they produced the same shaped curve. As time went on from the 1950s until the 1980s investigative stories had more features of investigative journalism than each period before; after the 1990s, certain qualitative features were seen less frequently.

Source: Author
Note: n = 45

Note n = 146 investigative stories  *=not a full Walkley Award decade
Of the key attributes of investigative journalism (according to the definition used here) fewer stories over the years 'uncovered a breach of public trust'. This was a discretionary field of the content analyses. This was true also for the 2011 online content analysis: only 25 per cent of stories fulfilled this criterion. The other three discretionary fields varied depending on the study and the era, but none varied by more than ten per cent, much less than the variance seen with the 'breach of trust' measure. The other three measures were: 'standing up for the powerless by identifying victims or villains'; 'pursuing a suppressed truth' and the story 'operating within a normative moral framework' (see Figure 6.4). What this shows is that while there was no era when investigative stories excelled at 'uncovering a breach of public trust', the 1980s did excel at satisfying the other measures. This was a consistent finding in both the broadsheet and Walkley studies, and the 1980 standout results might help explain the lingering perception that it was a 'golden era' of investigative journalism.

Figure 6.4: Investigative Qualities Least Often Observed—Walkley Awards, 1960s-2000s

![Investigative journalism definition: What qualities were missing (Walkley award study)](image)

Source: Author
Note: n = 90 stories

The key to interpreting Figures 6.4 and 6.5 is to examine what is missing. Figure 6.4 shows — through the absence of pillars on the graph — that the 1980s fulfilled most of the discretionary fields within the operational definition of investigative journalism. It did this more so than any other era. This was also found to be the case in the broadsheet study (see...
Figure 6.5). In comparison, the 1960s had the most investigative stories that did not satisfy the discretionary fields as demonstrated in Figure 6.4 through the height of the pillars.

**Figure 6.5: Investigative Qualities Least Often Observed—Broadsheet Study, 1971-2011**

Figure 6.5 is less clearly differentiated than the Walkley study, but it does show 1981 still to be slightly better at fulfilling the discretionary definition criteria than the other periods (it has smaller pillars). Further it shows that 1991 had more attributes than 2001, and 2001 had more attributes than 2011. A subtle pattern has emerged that showed that, after 1981, each period had slightly fewer attributes that are commonly featured in the academic literature when defining investigative journalism, than the one before it. This subtle absence is consistent with falling revenues and circulations of print mastheads over time, which really began to affect newspaper operations from 1991, but particularly by 2001, and more so by 2011.

Therefore, when questioning at what stage were investigative stories most likely to have all defining attributes of investigative journalism, the answer is the 1980s. This result came independently from both content analyses. The 1980s was also the time when most broadsheets in the longitudinal study had their highest circulations recorded. In the 1980s, there was no great 'profit controversy' because advertising revenues were plentiful and considered 'liquid gold' (see Chapter Two). In other words, it was a much easier time for
newspapers to afford the time and cost of investigative journalism without making editorial compromises. Investigative journalist Chris Masters said that news journalism today favoured stories that were quick and easy to file because they tended not to require expensive editorial resources, especially time.

Masters stated: 'You can see why there is a bias towards celebrity profiles and opinion pieces, because they are not research intensive.' He said that, compared to the 1980s, there was a great irony that existed with investigative reporting today:

> It is a better age for practising investigative journalism because we have more efficient access to information, all those databases ... but I think that fewer journalists know how to do that than was the case 25 years ago ... The industry now is more about headlines than stories. More about squeezing out a quote than doing a comprehensive interview. I am not condemning my colleagues, they are the same people they were all those years ago, in many respects a lot better educated now, but they just don't have the time to do the work. They are rewarded for quantity not quality.8

Former proprietor of online business publication *Business Spectator* and a former editor of the *Age*, Alan Kohler, argued that, as hardcopy newspaper revenues have fallen, editors have had to make tough choices about how they use their editorial resources within a defined budget. If they constantly pursue expensive stories with no gain, their position could be at risk:

> The editor gets to decide how those resources are allocated but there is really no measurement [offline] of any individual article or section or type of journalism. Nobody really knows what is successful and what is not, nobody knows what anybody is reading. Everyone assumes that they know, but they do not. So what is going on then, is that the whole package is being created by an editor, and if that does not work they sack the editor and start again or give someone else a go and he [sic] will kind of adjust it slightly and see if that works. If it works, everyone is happy and the editor has a long and happy life but, as for whether the investigative

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7 Masters, C. 'Interview with the author,' 15 February 2011.
8 Ibid.
stories are important over the sports stories or opinion pages or the page three picture story, nobody knows.\textsuperscript{9}

By comparison, Kohler argued that in the digital era the popularity of a story can be measured when read online: 'We do watch how our stories rate and although we are sort of a subset of journalism on business, we can see that stories that are what I might call sensationalist or populist do rate quite well,' he said about his experience editing \textit{Business Spectator}, which he sold in 2012 to News Limited.\textsuperscript{10} Kohler argued that:

> The thing about journalism, what is going on is that the traditional cartels, owned by wealthy people, are being broken up. So the ability of these rich families to make large sums of money off newspapers and the media is being broken down by the Internet. Basically what is happening is the cartels are being destroyed. If it were not for the fact that journalism also has a role in the public interest, in the stability of the democracy, we would not care. If it were a bunch of car companies or bunch of confectionery companies we would be celebrating it.\textsuperscript{11}

Kohler said the challenge for editors was to effectively find the 'sweet spot' so as, 'to balance the idea of maximizing the clicks on the story, with the idea also of creating a brand that has a certain set of values.'\textsuperscript{12} This idea of balance between the budget and the reporting might, in part, explain why 1980s investigative journalism was more investigative as an overall cohort — cost was no object then. The values that resonated in the 1980s investigative stories reinforced the normative moral framework, and the journalists had the time, resources and as Masters suggests the training to produce stories that were able to defend the powerless, and pursue suppressed truths, or uncover breaches of public trust, more often in their investigations than they do now.

In 2011, investigative stories were still operating within a moral framework, and were still pursuing suppressed truths, but the broadsheet study showed that less often were these investigations defending the powerless compared to newspaper investigations in the 1980s and the 1990s. Nonetheless, and significantly, the quantity of investigative journalism was

\textsuperscript{9} Kohler, A. 'Interview with the author,' 5 October 2010.  
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
increasing each decade since the 1980s, as the previous chapter has demonstrated. This might be best understood in that, despite investigative journalism's expenses compared to other stories, editors would persist with it, adapting practices to save costs were they could, because it is good for developing a 'quality' brand.

For example, the ABC's Managing Director and former Fairfax editor-in-chief Mark Scott said that investigative journalism in Australian media organisations has always been subsidised, and companies do this because of its value to their brand: 'It is very rare for an investigative story to drive a spike that is going to drive the big circulations and increase ad revenues. Investigative journalism is all part of the brand of who you are.' Scott stated that investigative journalism was very important to the ABC brand:

> It can be subsidised by public broadcasting. It can be subsidised by philanthropy. It can be subsidised by other parts of your media organisation, but you will do it because it is an important part of the integrity of your brand to have content of consequence. Fundamentally, that is what it boils down to. If you have compelling stuff that people want to read and they think it is important and their life is less without it, and so I would argue, in an ABC context, you will still certainly have investigative journalism, that is a lot of what *Four Corners* is all about.\(^{14}\)

Scott argued that the commercial broadcast sector was affected by the 'profit controversy' much more now than when media moguls such as Kerry Packer owned television stations:

> I think the difficulty with the commercial television model now, and commercial radio, is that they do not think in terms of brand building over time. They think in terms of profit maximization now. Once, Kerry Packer would think, in terms of [investigator] Ross Coulthart on *Sunday*. He would think: "I am not going to make money out of that, but that is going to make me the news leader and I will make money off the back of that." Now the commercial sector say, "How do I maximise profit: Cartoons, or *Weekend Today* or *Two and a Half Men*?"\(^{15}\)

\(^{13}\) Scott, M. 'Interview with the author,' 19 August 2010.  
\(^{14}\) Ibid.  
\(^{15}\) Ibid.
He also argued that investigative journalism would need to be subsidised into the future: 'I still think there will be arguments for newspapers to be subsidised because of the brand.' In 2010 he noted that the ABC had collaborated twice with Fairfax journalists to pursue investigative stories in the public interest. He argued that there are many ways investigative journalism can be funded:

> There might well be a model about an independent philanthropic kind of organisation that is funded, that is doing the digging and making the stuff generically available, the way an AAP [news wire] works, but you have got to try a whole lot of these things. I still think though, that for certain kind of organisations, investigative journalism will need to be cross-subsidised but it has always been cross-subsidised. The ads in the classified of *The Age*, they funded [investigators] Gary Hughes and Gerard Ryle [in the 1990s].

Since making these comments, the ABC has engaged in several more collaborations with *The Age*'s investigative unit to bring a larger audience and greater impact to its stories, for example 'The Money Makers' (see Chapter Five). This is an important observation because it signals an adaption by Australian broadsheet media so that they can continue to produce investigative journalism despite declining revenues to support journalism. It reflects the experience of US newspapers also. In the words of Michael Schudson and Leonard Downie, writing about US newspapers in 2009, they predicted that:

> The remaining economically viable newspapers — with much smaller staffs, revenues, and profits — will try to do many things at once: publish in print and digitally, seek new ways to attract audiences and advertisers, invent new products and revenue streams, and find new partners to help them produce high-quality news at lower cost.

Fairfax broadsheets partnering with the ABC shows that Downie and Schudson's predictions for newspapers to find 'new partners' is occurring in Australia. Mark Scott also predicted that philanthropy would be sponsoring investigative journalism. Two years after that interview for this thesis, Australian billionaire Graeme Wood followed the example of US philanthropic

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16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
not-for-profit public interest news site ProPublica and donated $15 million to start up Australia's Global Mail in 2012. Like ProPublica, it is also a not-for-profit news and features website that does some investigative journalism. Its mission is 'to deliver original, fearless, independent journalism' in the public interest.\(^{19}\)

Internationally, not-for-profit investigative journalism organisations are growing. One of the better known is the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. Its director is former Fairfax Media investigative journalist and multi Walkley Award winner Gerard Ryle. From Washington D. C Ryle coordinates 160 reporters in more than 60 countries who collaborate on in-depth cross-border investigative stories. The ICIJ has partnered with major news organisations across the globe, uses social media sites to broaden its audience, and it receives significant philanthropic funding.\(^{20}\)

The previous chapter has shown that newspapers produce plenty of investigative journalism. What this section has identified is that in Australia the rise in collaborations, cross-subsidisation within a media organisation, and philanthropic media outlets collectively suggest a willingness within the broader media community to continue to provide the public with public interest investigative journalism despite an uninspiring economic outlook for commercial print media organisations. Emerging business models and trends for funding and producing investigative journalism in the future are discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight.

**Qualitative Features of Investigative Journalism: By Issue**

The operative definition was one way to measure discretionary differences between investigative reporting over the decades. Another way is to assess the story subject to consider investigative journalism's value to the public interest. This thesis examined whether investigative stories over the decades were about one-off issues or systemic issues in Australian society. As discussed in Chapter Two, David McKnight found single-issue reporting was commonly associated with 'muckraking' or exposure journalism, but systemic


investigative journalism had predominated in Australia since the 1970s.\textsuperscript{21} The term 'muckraker' was once a pejorative word said to have been coined by US President Theodore Roosevelt who used it to decry journalists whom he considered had crossed the ethical line in their efforts to expose deviance in government and beyond.\textsuperscript{22} At the turn of the century, the Australian weekly press revelled in muckraking, using the advantage of a weekly deadline to break their own exclusives about shysters and charlatans, with its left-leaning journalism usually defending the 'common man'.\textsuperscript{23}

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Oxford English Dictionary reflected this derogatory assessment of muckraking journalism, defining it as: 'a depraved interest in what is morally unsavoury or scandalous'.\textsuperscript{24} But its meaning changed, and later dictionary versions by the time of the 1960s reflected this. A self-confessed muckraker, British journalist Jessica Mitford, said when she was writing investigative stories in the 1950s and 1960s for British mastheads, the term muckraker had gained respectability. It became associated with seeking out and exposing corruption.\textsuperscript{25} American scholars James Ettema and Theodore Glasser also found like McKnight, investigative journalists favoured stories that went beyond a single case study. In contemporary times investigative stories tended to focus on broader trends or failures of a system rather than individual grievances.\textsuperscript{26}

The data from both content analyses supported the findings of McKnight, showing that most Australian investigative stories were about systemic issues since the 1960s (the 1950s data was not included because the Walkley awards did not begin until 1956, and thus, it did not represent a full decade of stories). But the four years of the 1950s that were available showed an even split between systemic and single-issue investigative reporting. This is consistent with the scholarly literature, which argues that single-issue reporting was more prevalent in this era. However, the Walkley award analysis also showed that there was a rise in single-

\textsuperscript{22} Mitford, J. \textit{The Making of a Muckraker}, London: Michael Joseph, 1979, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{24} Mitford, J. \textit{The Making of a Muckraker}, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
issue investigative stories again after the 1980s; although this was commensurate with an increase in story numbers overall and should perhaps not be over interpreted (see Figure 6.6).

Figure 6.6: Single-Issue Journalism Makes a Slight 1990s Comeback, 1950s-2010s

Overall, the Walkley analysis showed a third of all stories (60 out of 187) were about single issues, and less than a tenth (17 stories out of 187) were also considered investigative journalism. The interesting point is these 17 investigative stories were concentrated in the 1950s and the 1990s and 2000s, suggesting a minor resurgence in single-issue investigative reporting after the 1980s. A reason why this might be the case is that single-issue investigative stories are by and large simpler stories, requiring generally fewer editorial resources. For example, investigating an unscrupulous doctor might require one or two patient case studies, which is a simpler exercise and less time consuming than finding compelling evidence to demonstrate a corrupt health system. Yet, award-winning investigative stories generally do put in this time and effort. The Walkley story population favoured systemic reporting, because it is more likely to have a societal impact, which draws the story to the attention of Walkley judges. Two thirds of the Walkley population (127 stories out of 187) were about systemic issues, and a substantial 44% passed as investigative journalism.
The selected broadsheets showed no examples of investigative journalism about single issues in the months analysed from 1971 through to 2011 (see Figure 6.7). This is not to suggest that single-issue journalism was not published in newspapers in recent decades; the Walkley study showed that it was. Rather, it showed that single-issue journalism did not meet the definition of investigative reporting used here, and was therefore undetected when analysing investigative reporting. In essence, both content analyses independently showed most investigative reporting in the modern era was about systemic issues, but there was a small detectable increase in single-issue reporting towards the end of the twenty-first century.

This finding, although subtle, is interesting because as the news cycle has become faster in the 2000s and beyond, and — referring back to the comments of Masters, that the industry 'is more about headlines than stories' — it would be time and cost efficient for journalists to favour single-issue investigations. This approach would seem easier than assiduously investigating for possibly months to demonstrate a widespread corrupt practice, returning to the story again and again in order to make the case to the public. By their nature, follow-up stories — unless they contain a startling new revelation — are positioned on less prominent news pages because the essence of the story has already been told or 'broken' on premium news pages. Follow-up stories are less about headlines, and more about content. It would not be in the public interest if this trend toward single-issue investigative stories progressed, because in the words of US Knight Foundation journalist Eric Newton, it is not easy to measure the impact of news reporting. He pithily stated: 'News is not like electricity, when there's a news blackout, you don't know what you're not getting.'

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However, at this time there is no great cause for alarm. The online content analysis revealed the same prevailing trend as the other analyses, showing systemic-issue investigative journalism dominated online investigative reporting. While it is true that there were fewer investigative stories online, of those that were, three quarters were about systemic issues. This suggests that if online news sites are taking the time and effort to investigate a story, often in a collaborative effort with others, then they have some commitment to the genre of investigative journalism.

A further breakdown of the Walkley data revealed that profiles of artists, crime and corporate figures were most conducive to single-issue investigations. Corporate and crime stories dominated the investigative reporting in the 1990s and beyond, and this might also partly explain the slight rise in single-issue reporting. Michael Schudson identified that a feature of tabloidisation, was that crime stories become more prominent and more frequent.28

The Walkley corporate story examples that were found to be investigative journalism, included profiles of companies or business people, such as: The Sunday Age's Michael

Bachelard who wrote 'The Shadow Side of a Cardboard King' examining the questionable financial dealings of the late Richard Pratt (2010); Robert Gottliebsen's *National Times* story "'Gollin' The $120 Million Crash' (1978)" discussed in the previous chapter; Kate McClymont and Colleen Ryan's *Sydney Morning Herald* story, 'A Spot of Bother Over at Allens', the 'The Collapse of New Tel' by Geoff Elliott for *The Australian* (2002); and also, Morgan Mellish's *AFR* story, the 'Robert Gerard Tax Scandal' (2005).

It can be observed from this list that none of the stories was investigated and published in the 1980s. In the next chapter, corporate stories will be examined in more detail. From the findings here, it has been found that Australian investigative journalism generally is not strong at 'uncovering a breach of public trust'; and as identified here, corporate stories might investigate individuals, but they less commonly challenge systemic corporate power, this was particularly evident during the 1980s. In Australia, Jennifer Kitchener, Brian Toohey, Trevor Sykes and Graeme Turner have critiqued the business press and found it to be largely deficient: they also found an absence of critical reporting of the corporate sector particularly in the 1980s, before the stock market crash. Kitchener argued that finance journalists have acted as cheer-leaders for capitalism:

> By nature business reporting has always been 'pro-business', preferring to oil the wheels of capitalism rather than offer critical insights into the economic system and act as a counter-balance to abuses of power. And for as long as the commercial media have existed there has been a tension between advertising and marketing goals and editorial objectives.

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30 Gottliebsen, R. "'Gollin' The $120 Million Crash,' *The National Times*, 3 October 1978, p. not recorded in archive.
Of the single-issue crime reports, they were generally stories about an individual or particular event. They included Michael Beach and Viva Goldner's 2006 investigation for the Daily Telegraph into NSW Judge Marcus Einfeld, which showed that he had lied about a speeding ticket. The story ultimately cost the Judge his career and sent him to jail. There was also the tragic story in 2000 of the Queensland Childers' backpacker accommodation fire that killed 15, Adam Harvey's 'Heartbreak Hotel' for the Daily Telegraph; and Gary Tippet's 1997 story for the Sunday Age 'Slaying the Monster' about a sexual assault victim jailed for killing the predator who harmed him as a child. In contrast, some story topics do not seem suitable for single-issue story treatment. For example, as Figure 6.8 shows, indigenous, state government, sport and social welfare investigations have been subjects for systemic-issue stories throughout the past seven decades. David McKnight, writing in the 1990s, argued then that 'stories about Aborigines have often required some degree of investigative commitment because of the remoteness of many communities from city journalists'.

Figure 6.8: Subjects of Single-Issue Investigations (Blue), 1956-2011

Source: Author
Note: n=101

36 Beach, M. & V. Goldner, 'The Judge, the Professor and a Speeding Fine,' the Daily Telegraph, 8 August 2006, p. 9.
37 Harvey, A. 'Heartbreak Hotel - Eight Days in Childers / Ordeal by Inferno,' the Daily Telegraph, Weekend Extra, 1 July 2000, p. 38.
McKnight's observation in the 1990s, support this finding about indigenous issues. Meanwhile, the single-issue investigative story subjects identified in Figure 6.8 show that — although most single-issue stories generally fail the investigative test — the stories that passed had many qualitative features of investigative journalism. For example, 71 per cent of single-issue investigative stories belonged in the green zone. This signals that in these cases the subject topic suited a case study or profile approach to story telling. Therefore, attempts to associate only systemic investigations with quality journalism will fail to acknowledge that single-issue investigations can also be 'quality' journalism when the topic fits with this approach. Nonetheless, this thesis found that overall there are more systemic than single-issue investigations, and that it has remained the prevailing trend since first identified by McKnight.\(^{40}\)

**Qualitative Features of Investigative Journalism: 'Depth' of a Story**

To gain a more complete picture of quality in terms of a story's depth, or 'impact' on its audience, it is worth examining if investigative stories were more or less likely to be part of a series of articles. This speaks to the story's depth and probable audience impact because a series is more likely than a solitary story to keep an issue burning on the public agenda. Age investigative journalist Richard Baker stated that 'often the magnitude or significance of a story is defined by other media,'\(^{41}\) and therefore it is desirable when competitors follow an investigative story. If they do, it suggests the story was of a significance that made it too difficult to be ignored.

The Walkley analysis showed most winning stories (84%) were part of a series. This is expected given that 'impact' is one of the criteria that Walkley judges use to determine the winner. One way to have impact is to keep publishing stories about a particular issue over time. For example, in 1957 the *Sydney Morning Herald*'s Selwyn Speight spent months travelling around rural Australian towns to gauge how migrant workers coped with life in a new country and how the locals reacted to them. His five-part series printed over two months

\(^{40}\) McKnight, D. 'The Investigative Tradition in Australian Journalism 1945-1965,' p. 155.

\(^{41}\) Baker, R, 'Interview with the author,' 21 March 2011.
recorded dialogue between migrants and locals and interwined it with census data and facts. The 'Report on Migration' series won the 1957 'Best Feature' Walkley Award.\textsuperscript{42}

The broadsheet study, which is a more random selection of investigative journalism because it does not necessarily include award-winning stories, provided a different picture to the Walkley study. It showed that, over time, fewer investigative stories were part of a series (see Figure 6.9). The broadsheet study trend line (in red) showed that in 1971 all investigative stories were part of a series, but by 1991 onwards the number of print investigations that were part of a series hovered around 50 percent. The online content analysis also revealed the same trend line as the broadsheet analysis, only 50 per cent of stories were part of a series.

Figure 6.9: Two Studies Showing How Many Print Investigations Are a Story Series, 1970s-2010s

![Graph showing percentage of investigative stories that belong to a series, 1970s-2010s](image)

Source: Author
Note: n =146 investigative stories

Among the reasons why broadsheet newspapers might not be following up their own stories as they once did, is that the news cycle has become faster, and editorial resources must be accounted for. Journalists feel pressure to continue to come up with new stories for page one, and not to invest time in the same issue, especially if the follow-up stories are not as

\textsuperscript{42} Speight, S. 'Report on Migration: What the First Million Mean,' \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 23 April 1957, p. not recorded.
newsworthy. British academic Stephen Cushion, writing on this subject, also found that the influence of rolling news engendered by 24-hour television news coverage, had, 'moved print journalism away from supplying news and information towards the promotion of ideas and opinions.'\(^{43}\) Former *Age* investigative journalist and ABC 774 Drive presenter Rafael Epstein said that when he broke a significant defence story at *The Age* he decided not to follow it up beyond two stories:

> It disappeared without a trace. The ideal thing would be to follow it for another month and chase all the loose ends that I didn't develop. But I just let it go because I didn't know for sure that I was going to get anything by the end of the month ... the reality of the paper is that everyone has to produce, I don't think we have as much pressure as the other reporters, but you have to produce at some stage.\(^{44}\)

The faster news cycle can create competition between stories to get public attention and can make the public sphere of information crowded and noisy. Alan Kohler argued that newspapers might be disinclined to pursue investigative journalism because they no longer get a strong return benefit from the resources they put into their investigations due to the pace of the digital news cycle:

> When you have an investigative team what you're trying to get is a scoop right? So when I was writing in *The Age*, we set up an Insight team. In those days, before the Internet, your scoop was yours for 24 hours, till the next day. Now, as soon as you publish it [online], it is gone. So scoops last a minute. There is nothing to do about that. It is really out of everyone's control. Scoops are only for bragging rights, you get to say that this was your scoop, but I do not think [the audience] really care that much.\(^{45}\)

For this reason, Kohler said that when considering what content would go in the *Business Spectator*, one of few Australian online news models with sufficient revenues to employ journalists, the editorial team decided not to directly invest in investigative journalism:


\(^{44}\) Epstein, R. 'Interview with the author,' 21 March 2011.

\(^{45}\) Kohler, A. 'Interview with the author,' 5 October 2010.
We took the view that news, that is to say the new information about what is happening in the world, is a commodity everyone knows that, it is everywhere, it is on the Internet, it is on the news, on the TV and radio, there is absolutely no need for us to have news reporters because we can buy it from AAP and Reuters, so we do that. What we have is commentary to tell people what it means and the commentators get paid a lot of money and they are expected to be fairly expert in that, and to be good writers and so on. We do not have any investigative reporting at all because that just is not part of our model now.46

Also, it should be noted that rather than a series of investigative stories about an issue, some publications might view it as preferable to dedicate many pages to a single 'special report' or to an online multimedia feature in one big story hit. For example, the Sunday Age's Alan Attwood wrote a 2001 investigative story that was a reconstruction of the events that led to the fatality of track marshal Graham Beveridge during the 2001 Melbourne Grand Prix.47 The paper published Attwood's account over 12 pages, a month after the death. The year before, two Age journalists, Hamish Fitzsimmons and Mark Forbes investigated the illegal steroid market in Australia and produced their 'Made in Australia' report as a comprehensive online exclusive. It was one of the first multimedia investigative stories — it used footage, text and audio — produced primarily for this medium, and won a Walkley Award.48

Another reason why an investigative series over time might be giving way to a one-hit 'special investigation' is the lack of follow-up by other print media in an era of highly concentrated ownership of print media organisations in Australia. News Limited and Fairfax Media own approximately 90 per cent of Australia's newspapers (see Chapter Three).49 Despite the official ABC collaboration discussed earlier, there was remarkably little acknowledgment or follow up from other media about 'The Money Makers', especially from News Limited media. Richard Baker explained:

46 Ibid.
Because Australia's media landscape is so small you have got News Limited and Fairfax in the press as rivals, both companies are reluctant to follow each other's stories and that is probably not a good thing for readers, for the public. Now I think we have to get over that.\(^{50}\)

Other journalists have also attributed this failure to follow up a competitor's public interest stories to the toxic competition between Fairfax and News Limited. Masters said the media's failure to follow up a good story was a grave disservice to the public: 'One of the reasons that these stories aren't going further, is because sometimes the competition is so poisonous that a story won't have carriage because competitors refuse to acknowledge that it existed.'\(^{51}\)

Masters argued that in the past the different media organisations worked together on important stories to serve the public interest:

When I think about my doing the 'Moonlight State' in Queensland, I was really angry at that time that the *Courier Mail* kind of pinched the story from me because I had been working on it for a long time, and I didn't feel they had done their dues at all, but because they were aware of what I was doing they sort of jumped on the bandwagon at the last minute and made a bit of a splash about it. But fortunately the splash was the same splash. It was the same splash I made. But even though we were uncomfortable allies, we were effective allies at the end of the day ... When I look at the reporting of similar scandals in Victoria sometime later, every little corner of the media taking its own position and determinedly fighting each other really, and not taking the side of the public. We are really not collectively representing the interests of the public; I think that is quite telling when you consider the outcomes.\(^{52}\)

**Story Impact: Promoting Investigative Journalism**

When interviewed for this thesis, Kohler argued that the digital age had meant that 'journalism basically is becoming accountable in its components'.\(^{53}\) He pointed out that every story and its response can now be measured when read online. The qualitative analysis of broadsheets showed that as technology advanced, newspapers became more aware of marketing their stories, first in hardcopy, and later online. For example, rarely did stories in 1971 carry the author's name — a byline — unless it was a column or opinion /commentary

\(^{50}\) Baker, R. 'Interview with the author,' 21 March 2011.  
\(^{51}\) Masters, C. 'Interview with the author,' 15 February 2011.  
\(^{52}\) Ibid.  
\(^{53}\) Kohler, A. 'Interview with the author,' 5 October 2010.
piece. If it were, the piece was labelled as such and it was easily distinguishable from a news report.

By 1981, only major stories had a byline. But by 2011, all stories carried a byline or included the wire agency that provided the story. At the end of stories it is now commonplace to document the journalist's Twitter address or blog. Media academic Brain McNair argued that because there is so much information and noise in the public sphere, the power to influence can be returned to the traditional media gatekeepers to fill the role of 'sense makers' of the sheer volume of news information. 54 This is one reason why newspapers are emphasising picture bylines, to build the profile and reputation of journalists to provide authority and to be trusted in this sense-maker role.

However, in some cases the byline of a journalist has arguably become more influential than the masthead itself. For example, Herald Sun columnist and polemicist Andrew Bolt is syndicated across the News Limited group. He blogs daily and also writes hardcopy columns for News Limited's various daily papers. According to his website his columns appear in Melbourne's Herald Sun, Sydney's Daily Telegraph and Adelaide's Advertiser. 55 According to himself he has the most-read political blog in Australia. 56 He also hosts Channel 10's The Bolt Report each Sunday at 10am and repeated at 4.30pm, which attracts over 200,000 viewers. His collective audience across these media is conceivably much greater than the circulation of the Adelaide Advertiser, just one of the mastheads for which he contributes columns. Similarly, Annabel Crabb is a political journalist who writes a column for the Sunday Age, the ABC's online opinion website The Drum, and appears on its television program with the same name, as well as guest appearances on other ABC political shows such as Insiders and Gruen Planet, and its game show Randling. She also hosts a television political entertainment program Kitchen Cabinet on the ABC. Crabb's Twitter account stated in September 2012 that

56 Ibid.
she had 65,492 followers, which is a higher figure than the circulation of any Tasmanian newspaper.57

Therefore, in 2012, the byline is a quintessential feature for newspapers because it uses the profiles of certain journalists to garner audience. Once it was the reverse, print journalists relied on the masthead to build their personal profile. While this is still true, the examples of Bolt and Crabb show that it has become possible for the individual to arguably have as much influence or more than their newspaper employer. It is an example of the rise of individualism on which the digital era thrives. The rise of individualism is also a result of changes to the labour market in the Australian media, with fewer staff journalists, and a greater reliance on freelancers and casuals. As hardcopy mastheads lose circulation, revenues and ultimately influence, some individual journalists benefit from these power shifts and gain great authority from them.

Significantly, the broadsheet analysis of 2011 showed a form of promotion that was not possible in the past. As Alan Kohler stated, newspapers are now able to track their online readers' active engagement with a story and can promote it when a reader passes the story (or links it) to others using social media such as Twitter or Facebook.58 This can be very powerful if a reader has many followers. It provides for a more diverse and fragmented audience to read a story. Rafael Epstein said these forms of online measurement: Twitter, Facebook and any number of comments following a story, have become the key performance indicator for many media news managers. He said the danger in this, for print newspapers especially, is that these online numbers are often a reflection of a much smaller, particular audience that is reactive to certain types of stories: 'We have all become consumers, and in a news environment like that, no one cares about serious stories, just the big impact stories.'59 He argued the 'The Money Makers' was an important story about corporate corruption, yet it did not become a popular online story for The Age until it involved prostitutes, and only then did its online readership surge.60

58 Kohler, A. 'Interview with the author,' 5 October 2010.
59 Epstein, R. 'Interview with the author,' 21 March 2011.
60 Ibid.
Mark Scott argued the reach of a story because of promotion on social media could be very powerful.

Twitter is the best mechanism for disseminating fast breaking news that we have ever discovered. There are some algorithms you can run. I sent out a message I think when News 24 was going live, and it was retweeted 150 times in 30 minutes, and if you look at all those figures it got up to 300,000 people in a quarter of an hour. That's just amazing kind of multiplying.61

Thus, it can be seen that third party promotion through social media, and strategic promotion within a newspaper, might give an investigative story a more intense promotion over a shorter time than in the past. But this intense promotion is within the context that the modern news cycle delivers many more stories at a faster pace, but in a shorter time than previously, and stories can therefore disappear quickly too.

Finally, two other discernible broadsheet masthead trends since 1971 have been bigger pictures, and fewer stories on news pages. In 1971 the average number of stories on page one was eight. In 2011, it was more than half this, yet the stories were no lengthier (in most cases shorter). The extra space created by limiting stories was taken with other features of the layout design, namely: larger pictures, more advertisements, picture bylines, headlines and promotion of stories inside the newspaper. In 1971 pictures were undersized compared to 2011. The content analysis showed that typically, they occupied less than 10 per cent of page one; in 2011 they averaged 25 per cent. In 1971 the National Times and the Sydney Morning Herald did not display page one advertising. In 2011, advertising accounted for an average of 13 per cent of all surveyed broadsheets' front pages.

These changes are suggestive of what Bob Franklin called the McDonaldisation of news or McJournalism. Borrowing the term first from sociologist Max Weber, in his analyses of modernisation and rationalism, and then used by George Ritzer in the 1990s, when he coined the term McDonaldisation to describe the intensifying processes that characterises modernity, Franklin applied the term to modern journalism to depict the consumerable, and formulaic

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61 Scott, M. 'Interview with the author;' 19 August 2010.
bite-sized packages that have become modern news stories in newspapers. Franklin argued that newspapers have to make news formulaic in order to be readily accessible to readers: 'Consequently newspapers increasingly use big headlines, little (short) words, humorous (punny) headlines, sensational headlines, short stories, big pictures, colour pictures; more of them.' These trends that Franklin identified about print journalism in Britain in 2005, are evident here, in this study in 2011 (see Figure 6.10).

Figure 6.10: Number of Stories on Page One of the Broadsheets, 1971-2011

![Average no. of stories on page one of broadsheets](chart)

*Source: Author
Note: n= 448 page one news pages*

In 2013, print newspapers are much more likely to promote their stories to readers using tags such as 'exclusive', 'special report' and 'investigative report'. However, these labels are overused. In the general population of stories they were regularly applied to articles that were found not to be investigative journalism. This finding suggests that readers are bombarded with these tags and have possibly become desensitised to the 'specialness' of investigative reporting. This helps explain general perceptions that there is less investigative reporting now than in the past, because audiences are unable to appreciate authentic investigative journalism from over-hyped sensationalism, and this, in turn, dilutes the impact of important stories.

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The online analyses also found these labels were frequently used to promote online stories. In 1971, these tags were used very infrequently, but when they were used, they were applied accurately to investigative reporting and not to stories that fell outside the definition. This shows that editors consciously promote news stories as investigative journalism as a lure to readers.

In 1971 and 1981 investigative stories were more likely to be placed on a dedicated page for longer news stories inside the main newspaper (front book) rather than on page one. They also had dedicated federal, international and state political reporting pages. This was not the case in 1991, when most investigative stories started on the front page. Since then, increasingly investigative stories are promoted on page one and then leading the front pages of particular sections, especially sport, business and the dedicated weekend news feature magazine. Investigative stories generally need space to be told, and sections can provide the pagination to tell a longer story; increasingly page one cannot because of the increased picture sizes and advertising, or as Franklin described it, McDonaldisation.

In terms of accountability, the broadsheet analysis also found that most investigative journalism named sources. Essentially, this practice has endured over time, although easing slightly. In 1971 all sources in the investigative stories were named, by 2011 four out of five stories named all sources in investigative reports (See Figure 6.11). All investigative stories in the 2011 online analysis also named their sources. This is reassuring in the context of McKnight's research, which found that unnamed sources can be a key indicator that the media are being used as part of others' propaganda campaigns,63 and also because naming sources is an important element of the MEAA Code of Ethics.64

Figure 6.11 shows that investigative journalism was most often placed on the front page in 1991. While it continues to be placed prominently (it is sometimes on the front page of magazines or sections) other types of stories are taking its former place on page one. In terms of naming sources, fewer investigative stories do this in 2011 compared to 1971, but the standard is still over 80 per cent, and this was reflected in online investigative stories too. The use of in-house promotional techniques has increased over time, reflecting the need to market investigative stories in a highly competitive, fast news environment.

Conclusion

While there is no single measure or agreement on what is 'quality journalism', this chapter has used qualitative and quantitative data to assess how broadsheet investigative journalism's qualitative features have changed over seven decades. It has found that the 1980s stands apart from other periods of investigative reporting on the 'quality' measures applied here. Indeed, it was investigative reporting in the 1980s that prompted media academic Julianne Schultz to
argue that the media had become 'equal contenders' in the existing power dynamic and not, as previously thought, 'cooperating servants' to authoritative figures.\textsuperscript{65}

From this study, systemic-issue investigations were more prevalent than single-issue, or its predecessor muckraking reporting, in all periods after the 1960s, and this was also consistent with the academic literature. However, there was an indication that single-issue reporting had slightly increased since the 1990s. This incremental rise could be attributed to the popularity of criminal and corporate stories, which are well suited to single-issue investigations and are popular topics reflective of the tabloidisation of news values. Michael Schudson identified that a feature of tabloidisation is that crime stories are prominent and popular.\textsuperscript{66} This is further analysed in the next two chapters. In terms of corporate stories, the findings indicate the print media, namely the \textit{AFR}, has the capacity to investigate individual transgressions more so than systemic failures in this sector.

It was also found that investigative journalists today are dedicating less time to following up their own stories or competitor's investigations, than previously. This became obvious after the 1980s. The 1980s can be seen as the end of the 'sweet spot' when circulations and revenues began to fall and the 'profit controversy' became a consideration. Print media ownership also became more concentrated at this time with the death of all of Australia's evening papers by 1993. Rather than allocate editorial resources to investigations for longer periods to produce follow-up stories, editors instead used more promotion and marketing to produce more one-off investigative articles. For example, in 1991 more investigative stories than before led the front page. Taglines earmarking the story as 'exclusive' or as a 'special investigation' were also used more frequently, albeit often inappropriately. Newspapers changed their front-page formats to include more lucrative page one advertising sitting alongside fewer news stories, but also with more visual promotion of stories within the paper.

The arrival of the digital age saw a rise in cross-media collaborations and third party promotion using online social media webpages. Social media and individual journalists with large online followings have enabled investigative stories to be disseminated to audiences


\textsuperscript{66} Schudson, M. \textit{The Sociology of News}, p. 90.
beyond their masthead's own. With new ways to promote stories, news investigations do not always start on page one as they did in the 1990s. They may begin a section, such as: sport, business or the weekend magazine, but they still usually have a front page pointer to these sections.

Another way of understanding these modern phenomena of fewer investigative series, less mainstream media follow up, and more intense short-term promotions, is that contemporaneous investigative stories can achieve a bright initial flare of interest, but the flame does not last as long as it once did — such as the time when a newspaper would write a series to keep the issue on the public agenda for months. This difference might create the perception that there are fewer investigative stories or, secondly, that they are of lesser quality than in the past because their impact is not felt for as long. The first of these perceptions, the quantity of stories, was disproved in Chapter Five.

The answer to the second reflects the key research question here about the relationship between falling circulations and revenues of Australian broadsheet newspapers and the 'quality' of their investigative journalism. The evidence is that as circulations and revenues fell in the late 1980s, investigative journalism did experience qualitative changes. The results showed that after the 1980s, fewer newspaper investigations had as many qualitative features of investigative definition with fewer stories that defended the powerless or uncovered a breach of public trust. Investigative stories were also less likely to be part of an ongoing series, which might have limited their public 'impact'. But to definitively argue the 'quality' of investigative journalism is less now then in the past would be to overlook the adaptations that have taken place so that print investigative journalism continues to be produced through collaborations and one-off 'special reports'. The next chapter will focus specifically on 'targets' and story outcomes of broadsheets' investigative journalism to further interrogate the question about the role of investigative journalism in Australian broadsheets over time.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Investigative Journalism, Public Sphere and Democracy

Introduction

This chapter takes a different approach to the previous results chapters. It is more descriptive and historical about Australian investigative journalism over 55 years from 1956 to 2011 because in a thesis about investigative journalism it seems odd not to actually detail some investigative stories. So, it will examine styles of writing and language to give a flavour of stories, their investigative targets, and public impact. In doing so, this chapter will provide an original history of Australian investigative journalism over the past half century. But it also uses quantitative and qualitative methods to scrutinise the societal outcomes of print investigative journalism, especially of broadsheets, and to consider their contributions to Australian democracy. Earlier, it was established that Australian broadsheets, particularly in the 1980s, have provided the public sphere with significant examples of investigative journalism over the decades. The task now is to understand how broadsheet newspapers' investigative journalism might strengthen Australian democracy.

The tension between quality and profitability, described as the 'profit controversy' in the previous chapter, will also be further explored. In these pages it should be possible to identify detectable changes in investigative journalism over the time that newspaper profitability has decreased. One way this will be assessed is to revisit the research of Rodney Tiffen who identified three general categories of investigative journalism: 1) investigations of neglected issues — whereby the powerless are given a voice; 2) the revision of major events, such as an unsolved crime; and 3) gathering of new information by disclosing a secret wrongdoing. As discussed in Chapter Three, Tiffen argued that the third type of story was the least common, but pivotal in delivering information into the public sphere that would not otherwise be known. He argued the third type of stories were often difficult to authenticate, and with no

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guarantee that a story would result. The time taken to authenticate or discard a story is a factor that makes investigative journalism expensive. Therefore, it might be presumed that in recent years there would be fewer of Tiffen's third category of investigative journalism because it takes time, money and resources to find new information; and in recent decades broadsheets' revenues have fallen. Many in the literature, Bob Franklin, Stephen Barnett, John Street and Steve Doig to name a few, generally argue that investigative journalism in developed nations has declined as print revenues have fallen.

So, in sum, this chapter will do three things. It will identify the popular subjects or targets for investigative stories for each decade since the 1960s (the first full decade of Walkley data). Using case studies in each decade, it will examine broadsheet investigative journalism's contribution to Australia's 'democracy and society's well-being'; and, finally it will identify whether Tiffen's third category of investigative journalism: 'investigating new information', has decreased over time as the literature suggests.

**The 'Public Interest' and the Fourth Estate**

The Fourth Estate has been discussed in earlier chapters, and will be critiqued further in the final chapter but, for the purposes here, it is used to explore the ideal of a free press able to provide a check on political and institutional power. Juliane Schultz, in her book using this phrase in its title, wrote: 'it is best considered as an ideal, consisting of elements of truth, multiple meanings and lashings of ambition'.

By examining the outcomes of investigative journalism, this chapter considers broadsheets' role as the Fourth Estate, and broadsheet journalism's relationship to the 'public interest'. To do this, investigative story outcomes were researched and recorded. This was achieved by cross-referencing stories with academic media databases *Factiva* and *Lexis Nexis*, sometimes years after a story was printed, to determine any public consequences. At times, personal

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2 Ibid.
interviews and correspondence with the journalist also provided this information. For example, public outcomes have ranged from judicial inquiries, legislative reform and criminal charges to high-profile political and bureaucratic sackings.

However, caution is applied in relying only on outcomes as a measure of the worth of investigative journalism, and therefore this must be considered in a broader context. Five-time Walkley winner and investigative journalist at *The Australian*, Hedley Thomas, best explained why:

> In terms of outcomes there is investigative journalism that will not have enormous public interest outcomes. And there will be investigative journalism that will have huge public interest outcomes, and there will be investigative journalism that has outcomes that will probably not be in the public interest. So I think it becomes quite controversial when you try to define investigative journalism by the outcome. Sometimes due to the skullduggery of governments the wrong outcome is the product of investigative journalism.\(^6\)

Investigative reporting in the 'public interest' also needs to be differentiated from exposure journalism. As Thomas stated, it is clear that not all revelations or 'truths' are worth pursuing, and particularly not in the name of the public interest. To realise the difference, the words of the editor of Manchester's *Guardian*, Alan Rusbridger, are repeated here from Chapter Two:

> What's the public interest in a cricketer having a love romp in a hotel room...But if elected representatives are arguing a case in Parliament but not revealing that they are being paid to do so, then that strikes at the heart of democracy. That's public interest, this is an easy distinction.\(^7\)

Rusbridger argued it was the 'quality' of the target and its relationship to the public interest that elevated a story to the genre of investigative, rather than it being mere smear or exposure journalism.

Public interest journalism is important because it underpins a healthy democracy, as Penny O'Donnell, David McKnight and Jonathan Este argued:

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\(^6\) Thomas, H. 'Interview with the author,' 18 July 2012.

Newspapers are the main vehicle for what is variously known as watchdog journalism, public interest journalism and investigative journalism. The permanent weakening of these functions, as the recent Independent Media Inquiry noted, may cause “damage to democracy and society's well-being” (Finkelstein 2012).  

For O'Donnell et al., there is irreconcilable tension between the binary that is a newspaper's profitability and its capability to maintain a public interest role. They argued that newspaper publishers 'see the narrow consequences of the loss of profitability of their industry, but not the collective problem that this failure presents to society as a whole'. They stated that: 'Surprisingly, they [the publishers] argue “this should not be seen, automatically, as a cause for alarm or a fall in standards” (NPA 2011). This chapter examines this binary through the lens of the 'targets' (or subjects) of newspaper investigative journalism.

The Most Popular Subjects for Investigations, 1956-2011

The Walkley data showed that the most favoured investigative topics over time were crime and business/corporate stories (see Figure 7.1). The red columns show how many stories were investigative stories within each particular subject genre, and this is compared to how many overall stories (including non investigative) were included in each subject (denoted in blue). Although few in number, stories about statutory authorities, indigenous issues or social welfare were most likely to be investigative stories as discussed in the previous chapter. This might indicate that these topics are strong investigative subjects, and/or commensurate with winning awards.

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8 Ibid., p. 4.
Thus, the top five subjects for newspaper investigations since the 1960s were, in order: crime, corporate, international, federal and state politics (equal fourth), and investigations of statutory authorities. The popularity of each subject varied between decades and this is discussed under each decade heading.

Source: Author
Note: n=187
Comparing the Walkley investigative stories with the broadsheet data, it can be seen that the same topics frequently occur as investigative subjects, but the order varies a little between decades (see Figures 7.2 and 7.3). Crime is the most frequently occurring investigative subject genre for both content analyses overall. Importantly, corporate stories do not feature as often in the broadsheet study. This difference can be explained by the significant contribution of the *Australian Financial Review* (AFR) to corporate investigative journalism, particularly since the 2000s. This masthead, however, was included in the Walkley study, but, as a tabloid, it was not included in the broadsheet study. The broadsheet mastheads have not engaged in as many corporate investigations; the reasons for this will be discussed shortly.

**Figure 7.3: Investigative Stories by Subject — Broadsheet Study, 1971-2011**

![Bar chart showing investigative stories by subject from 1971 to 2011 for broadsheets.](image)

Source: Author  
Notes: n=38

**Investigative Journalism in the 1960s**

Starting with the 1960s, the Walkley data (Figure 7.2) showed that crime stories were the most common, but many failed the investigative test used here. This was because they were stories that reported crimes of the day, rather than investigations that sought to verify facts, which takes time and research. All but one of the award-winning crime stories from the 1960s belonged to tabloids. According to Whitton, investigative journalism did not really
appear until the late 1950s, so it is of no surprise that the pass rate for investigative journalism was low in the 1960s.

Whitton said that some credit for a more investigative approach should be given to Tom Fitzgerald, the former SMH finance editor, who established the fortnightly journal, the Nation in 1958. Whitton described it as one of the first outlets for 'explainer journalism'. Former ABC Managing Director Brian Johns said that the Nation 'examined our institutions, our business and our artistic communities at a depth quite unfamiliar to the conventional media'.

Of the stories that were found to be investigative in the 1960s, international stories topped the list, and all published by broadsheets. While it is true that tabloids had more award-winning investigative journalism in this era (the only decade where tabloids outstripped broadsheets) it was broadsheets that exclusively won Walkley awards for investigative stories about international subjects in the 1960s. Nevertheless, their international targets were close to home: the future of the Vietnam War; the social and political problems for the then named New Guinea; and the implications for Australia of the policy of apartheid in South Africa. Each investigation was a series, and each involved the journalist travelling to the country in question and filing several reports over weeks.

The outcomes of the stories are difficult to quantify definitively, but observations can be made. For example, E. W. (Bill) Tipping's series for the Melbourne Herald in 1960 about White Africans leaving South Africa in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre that killed 72 blacks, prompted debate about Australia's White Australia policy. Tipping arrived within a week of the March massacre and encountered grieving and frightened South Africans seeking to migrate to Australia and other Commonwealth countries. Boats were advance booked up to three months ahead. Tipping wrote: 'We Australians just can't understand how any white

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10 Whitton, E. 'Interview with the author,' 8 February 2012.
11 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
man's government could bring itself to use such methods as cold-blooded machine-gunning, bashing and flogging of natives.\textsuperscript{16} One of his interviewees, editor of \textit{Die Transvaler} Dr J. D. Scholtz, said of Australia's White Australia policy: 'You Australians showed the way.'\textsuperscript{17} It was later in this decade, and the next, that successive laws were passed to dismantle the White Australia Policy and allow access to non-European migrants, including Vietnam War refugees. Tipping's stories deserve some credit for progressing this important debate. Gwenda Tavan's historical analysis of the White Australia Policy attributes policy reform in part to journalists such as Tipping building pressure for change with their stories about immigration based on an ideology of racial determinism.\textsuperscript{18}

Another international broadsheet investigation, the 1968 'Best Newspaper Feature Story', had the Vietnam War as its subject. John Hurst wrote a series of stories for \textit{The Australian} about the war's effects on North Vietnam. He was Australia's first journalist to gain access to the Northern state, and he wrote eight articles over three weeks about the devastation Northern cities had suffered at the hands of the Allies. An example of Hurst's account of the bombing of Phu Ly follows:

\begin{quote}
The city is a wilderness of rubble. Over an area of several square miles only a few walls, stripped of their roofs, and a solitary church spire still stand. After the war they will rebuild the city but now, like so many of the other ruins of North Vietnam, it is a monument for others to see. Driving south we pass maize and sugar cane fields ...\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

Like Tipping's reportage, it was descriptive and sometimes used the first person. It used quotes sparingly, preferring paraphrasing to tell the reader what has happened through the eyes of the journalist. By the end of the 1960s, feature writing was to become more experimental with dialogue, as will be shown by the example of Evan Whitton's stories shortly.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 29.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Hurst, J. 'Phu Ly, Drowned in a Sea of Fire,' \textit{The Australian}, July 25 1968, page not recorded in archive.
\end{flushleft}
The qualitative analysis of broadsheets in 1971, a short time after some of the cited examples were printed in the late 1960s, found that the more general news international stories (non-investigative) were easily the most popular lead story on page one (36 per cent). In-house journalists working as foreign correspondents wrote almost all of these stories. It seemed editors thought Australians wanted an international outlook from their broadsheets. In comparison, the page one lead stories of broadsheets in 2011 were domestic, mostly about federal politics (22 per cent). International stories had fallen to half what they once were and accounted for 15 per cent of front-page story leads. Another recordable change in 2011 was that fewer international stories were written by in-house foreign correspondents compared to the 1970s, most now came from wire services or from casually employed journalists on location, known as stringers.

This finding is not unexpected. Australian newspapers have closed several foreign bureaus to cut costs, particularly during the Global Financial Crisis in 2008. This Western newspaper trend of shutting and downsizing foreign bureaus occurred in the USA with only the major papers keeping their foreign bureaus, and the British newspapers have also cut many overseas journalist postings. 20 Australia's media union, the MEAA, stated that a recent analysis of US newspaper coverage found 64 per cent of surveyed newspapers had cut back on foreign news. 21 It also stated that 'in Australia, both major corporations have made small cuts to the size and scale of bureaus'. 22 In an interview for this thesis, founder of The Conversation Andrew Jaspan argued that one reason for this is easy access to international news from other newspapers through the Internet, lessening the demand from readers for local interpretation of foreign events. 23 In a separate interview, ABC local radio drive presenter Rafael Epstein argued that the news values of various media organisations in Australia have converged, and the overall loss of foreign coverage exemplified that trend: 'If you compare the national, international and domestic content of an ABC 7 pm news bulletin to a Channel Nine bulletin from 10 years ago, they will be about the same.' 24 Further, media academic Colleen Murrell's 2011 research into the relationship between broadcast media and their local assistants also

21 Ibid., p. 23.
22 Ibid., p. 21.
23 Jaspan, A. 'Interview with the author,' 30 October 2012.
24 Epstein, R. 'Interview with the author,' 21 March 2011.
called 'fixers' found that these local agents were much more widely used as editorial resources than previously thought. This was potentially problematic because while 'fixers' can help to provide a localised interpretation of news into correspondents' stories, they nonetheless came from a professional class of English-speakers and mostly represented a localised version of a Western perspective, which limited, or sanitised, coverage of foreign news.25

In the 1960s international investigative examples, investigating reporters were not necessarily part of a foreign bureau. However, broadsheet newspapers invested money sending these journalists abroad for many weeks to pursue stories. For example, Bill Tipping filed every day for three weeks.26 Then, the actual foreign correspondents were employed to write news stories for page one, rather than to undertake lengthy investigations.

The data showed that investigative international stories did not rise to prominence in subsequent decades until the next time Australia was in a protracted war campaign. This was the decade of the 2000s, following the terrorism attacks on September 11, 2001. Therefore, the finding that international stories were the most prominent investigative subject in the 1960s might also be understood in the context of the changing international order: the Cold War and Australia's engagement in Vietnam.

As mentioned earlier, towards the end of the 1960s, writing styles were changing. Long, descriptive passages were traded in for snappier reportage using more dialogue and favouring present tense. Newspaper feature writers started to play around with 'new journalism' inspired by American writers like Tom Wolfe.27 This reporting style combined seemingly insignificant details with Wolfe's literary techniques to write vivid non-fiction news.28 Here is a reconstruction that Whitton wrote about one of his meetings with anti-corruption campaigner Dr Bertram Wainer in the 'new journalism' style:29

27 Whitton, E. 'Interview with the author,' 8 February 2012.  
28 Ibid.  
29 The original series of stories was in the Melbourne Truth. This extract was reprinted a few years later for Man
Judith got me a vodka, which seemed to be the tipple I'd fallen into in that place, and improved on the Scotch she and Wainer were drinking. Wyatt [former policeman, turned backyard abortionist] absentmindedly sipped away at the London Dry. The atmosphere, at this stage, was quite matey, despite the fact that, during the Winter Offensive, Wainer and Mrs Berman [whistleblower] had done their damndest to have Wyatt put away, and despite the fact I had written a piece called Harry, the Backyard Aborter, which was a thinly disguised account of Wyatt's career to that point. It posed the question to Inspector Jack Ford: 'Well, here's old Charlie scraping away in the backyard and the very dogs are barking the fact, so why haven't the cops been able to find him?'

Corresponding with this author, Whitton told how his editor at Truth Sol Chandler demanded insignificant details and so he combined this with Wolfe's literary techniques to write vivid non-fiction news. One of Whitton's late 1960s investigations, which won the 1970 Walkley for 'Best Piece of Newspaper Reporting', was 'The Ugly Cloud', which blew the whistle on police corruption and illegal abortion. It is a model case study of tabloid, crime investigative journalism in this era and it was a very early example of systemic-issue reporting in Australia, which had significant public interest outcomes.

**Abortion and Police Corruption (1969)**

In the late 1960s, Dr Bertram Wainer made allegations of a police protection racket involving Victorian abortionists. For a fee, police would not pursue doctors and backyard abortionists who performed illegal abortions on vulnerable women. Whitton seized on the allegations, publishing details of six sworn affidavits alleging police extortion. The Truth's revelations led to a government board of inquiry chaired by Melbourne Queen's Counsel Bill Kaye. Consequently, Jack Ford, Jack Matthews and Martin Jacobson of the homicide squad were jailed.

The stories, and Wainer's dedicated campaign, also led to abortion law reforms. Whitton earned his second Walkley award. He stated that, 'the task was made easier by the failure of

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31 Whitton, E. 'Interview with the author,' 8 February 2012.
other organs of the media to turn up during Dr Wainer's campaign to show that bad laws made bad cops’. Whitton argued that, 'police roundsmen tend to be prisoners of the source. I suspect editors made the error of believing them when they said Dr Wainer was mad and bad and there was nothing in the police corruption story.'

Both Whitton's tabloid story and the broadsheets' international investigative stories from the 1960s, demonstrated the media's newfound preference for systemic-issue reporting (see Chapter Six). The investigative journalism of this era started to have a broader social reform agenda, rather than pursuing single-issue investigations about an individual shyster.

Using Tiffen's typology of investigative journalism (see Figure 7.4) this author applied his categories to the Walkley data to see which types of investigations were most common in each decade. The results revealed that the 1960s was better at investigations of neglected issues — stories that stood up for the powerless — than contemporary investigative journalism. This can be seen in some of the examples mentioned, and concurs with the findings in Chapter Six. Another example was the focus on indigenous issues, particularly by the tabloids. One example was the Sunday Mirror's Keith Newman, who travelled through Aboriginal settlements in NSW to tell readers about the disparity between white and black living standards. Through a series of articles, he also probed the issue of racism in Australia. Newman won the 1961 Walkley for 'Best Newspaper Feature Story'. This also fits with earlier findings that the 1960s was the only era where tabloids dominated investigative journalism. Tabloids, particularly those like the Sunday Mirror, used the advantage of a weekly deadline to break their own exclusives, often defending the 'common man [sic]'.

Figure 7.4 is most easily interpreted by examining the peaks of each category to see which types of investigations were most prevalent in each decade. Of interest is the 1980s and 2000s, which saw investigations serving at least two purposes (denoted in purple). This

33 Whitton, E. 'Interview with the author,' 8 February 2012.
34 Ibid.
suggests that the 2000s on this measurement performed as well as the 1980s in providing investigative journalism of substance.

Figure 7.4: Most Popular Investigation Type Using Definitions of Rodney Tiffen, 1960s-2000s

Investigative Journalism in the 1970s

The research also showed that the 1970s was one of several peaks for investigative journalism that unearthed 'new information'. That is, it was the journalist rather than lawyers, police, government reports, parliamentary committees or other authorities that revealed the wrongdoing, and brought it to the public sphere for the first time. This is consistent with the academic literature that documents that investigative journalism rose to prominence in Australian newsrooms in this decade following the glamourisation of the 'Watergate' exposé in the US, and early successes of the specialist investigative unit at The Age (see Chapter Three). Both analyses of the Walkleys and broadsheets from the 1970s showed this 'new information' was mostly about investigating corporate power.

More generally, there was a mix of story genres in the 1970s, but a noticeable decline in international investigations. This might be understood in the context that Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War had ended by 1973. The most common genres — corporate and political reporting — demonstrated that investigations about domestic events had gripped the gatekeepers' attention.

No story in this decade was perhaps a greater example of investigative journalism's capacity to influence Australian democratic society than the Melbourne Herald's 'Khemlani Tells' investigation. This page one story appeared after several months of international travel and massaging of contacts, and it arguably contributed to the end of the Whitlam Labor Government. It is summarised here because it exemplified a political story subject from the 1970s with significant public outcomes.

**The Loans Affair 'Khemlani Tells' (1975)**

The Whitlam Government sought to borrow about $4 billion from oil-rich Arab nations to fund large-scale natural resource and energy projects.\(^{38}\) The then Federal Minister for Minerals and Energy, Rex Connor, was accused of bypassing the Treasury-approved model for raising funds by using an intermediary to tap into monies from the Middle East. By mid-1975, the controversy over the attempt to secure the loans by unconventional methods saw Connor's authority to raise the money revoked.

*Herald* journalist Peter Game travelled extensively to find and interview the London-based commodity trader who had acted as the intermediary, Tirath Khemlani. Connor denied Khemlani's version of events. Khemlani, a meticulous record keeper, then flew to Australia and provided Game with telexes between himself and Connor contradicting the Minister's denials. *The Herald* published the evidence on 8 October 1975.\(^{39}\) A week later, after receiving a copy of the telexes and a statutory declaration from Khemlani, Prime Minister Whitlam

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dismissed Connor from Government for misleading the Parliament.\textsuperscript{40} Opposition leader Malcolm Fraser used the 'most extraordinary and reprehensible' example as one reason for using his numbers in the Senate to block supply.\textsuperscript{41} This led to the Australian Constitutional crisis that saw Whitlam dismissed from office by the then Governor-General Sir John Kerr.

Here, irrespective of one's view of the constitutional rights or wrongs of Kerr sacking Whitlam, investigative journalism provided the public with information they had a right to know, the source of public borrowings, but might not otherwise have known were it not for Game's investigative journalism.

\textbf{Investigating Corporate Power in the 1970s}

The broadsheets' 1970s investigative reporting focused on corporate and political power, while the tabloids concentrated on crime reporting — and financial stories but only insofar as they stood up for ordinary citizens in danger of exploitation, such as Catherine Martin's internationally recognised series in the tabloid \textit{West Australian}, which exposed the dangers of asbestos mining, as discussed in Chapter Five.\textsuperscript{42} Another example of a tabloid corporate story in the 1970s was Andrew Horton's investigation for the \textit{Hobart Mercury} into shady land deals. Horton won the 1970 Walkley for 'Best Piece of News Reporting' and a Premier's award for exposing misleading land deals in the town of Rhyndaston that were sold to unsuspecting residential buyers without services (and no future plans approved to allow services), as well as many sites without road access.\textsuperscript{43} Horton's series of stories were similar to the early successes of \textit{The Age}'s 'Insight' team, comprising Ben Hills and Philip Chubb. Their revelations about Victoria's corrupt housing commission land deals in 1974, where real estate agents benefitted from inside government information about planned land developments, eventually contributed to the Hamer/Thompson Government downfall.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{40} Tiffen, R. \textit{Scandals, Media, Politics & Corruption in Contemporary Australia}. 1999, p. 92.
\textsuperscript{44} Robinson, P. 'Interview with the author,' 20 January 2012.
Until the late 1970s very few financial journalists won Walkley awards because those types of stories were not considered of 'extraordinary human interest'.\textsuperscript{45} Horton's was only the second Walkley to acknowledge business journalism. The first was \textit{The Age's} Kenneth Davidson's two years prior, for a scoop on the devaluation of the Australian dollar.\textsuperscript{46}

Former editor of the \textit{AFR} and founding editor of the \textit{National Times} in 1971, Vic Carroll argued that it took until the late 1960s and early 1970s for Australian newspapers to properly investigate corporate and government power. He said:

\begin{quote}
The \textit{Sunday Times} in London showed the way with the establishment of special task forces to investigate certain targets [in 1967] — a big investment which would have horrified most Australian publishers, but which paid off in circulation and reputational gains in a highly competitive market. For years the [Australian] metropolitan newspapers all but ignored the obvious scope for corruption between property developers and local and state governments ... Challenging the official version of events by big government and big business was a difficult matter.\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}

**Investigative Journalism in the 1980s**

To briefly recap so far, international stories were important investigative stories in the 1960s arising from Cold War and regional concerns; and corporate and political power stories came to the fore in the 1970s during the tumult of federal politics in the Whitlam era, and because newspapers became more questioning of power. What then, was the main target of investigative reporting in the 1980s? The data showed it was crime stories. But this time, it was broadsheets and magazines dominating the crime genre, not just tabloids as had been the case in previous decades.

Julianne Schultz considered the 1980s as something significantly special for Australian investigative reporting. In Schultz's view the news media in the existing power dynamic during this time had transitioned from a 'cooperating servant' of authoritative figures to an

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{45} Hurst, J. \textit{The Walkley Awards: Australia's Best Journalists in Action}, 1988. p. 58. \\
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{47} Carroll, V. J., cited in Whitton, E. 'Interview with the author,' 8 February 2012.
\end{flushright}
'equal contender'.

Schultz argued that the innovations of investigative reporting in the 1960s and the 1970s set the scene for profound change during the 1980s. She claimed that the bedrock subjects of the 1980s were 'official corruption and the links between the police, politicians and business'.

She, along with McKnight, also noted that much of the breakthrough investigative work was, 'built on what had been reported before, but it took it to new levels of significance'.

The data here supports most of Schultz's claims. For example, 79 per cent of the Walkley awarded investigative stories were about crime or corruption. However, the sampled broadsheet data showed the targets of stories to be more diverse than the sample of Walkley Award winners. Perhaps this is because the broadsheet investigative stories were sampled from the start of the 1980s rather than the entire decade; whereas the broadsheet data for 1991 closely resembled the Walkley findings of the 1980s. For example, in 1991, 75 per cent of broadsheet investigative stories were about crime or corruption of a public institution or individual (see Figure 7.3).

For other reasons, Schultz was correct about the 1980s being special for investigative reporting. The Tiffen typology also showed (see Figure 7.4) that the 1980s stories often fitted within at least two categories. This suggests that the investigative stories were able to fulfill more than a singular objective, and could be said to be more complex investigations. The only other time this happened was two decades later, in the 2000s. Chapter Five also found that the 2000s stood out as a second golden era for its quantity of print investigative journalism.

In the 1980s, among the many Walkley crime/corruption stories was Paul Heinrichs' 'Bottom of the Harbour' investigation. Heinrichs' 12-part series for the National Times centred on tax avoidance schemes, and won the 1982 'Best Piece of News Reporting' award.

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49 Schultz described that change as having three distinct phases: the first phase, she called 'assessing the boundaries,' but it was characterised by legal caution; the second was 'pushing the limits' and was less cautious; and the third was 'confronting power with public interest'.
50 Ibid., p. 196.
between March to August in 1982, the series showed that the Federal Government had not closed a tax evasion loophole, enabling so-called respectable businesses to avoid tax.\textsuperscript{52} In terms of Tiffen's typology this story brought new information to the public sphere, it reconstructed past events and also re-examined neglected issues.

Also, as observed by Schultz, Heinrichs' work, while deserving and original, was nonetheless built on the investigative journalism that went before it. This earlier investigative work was not detectable through analysis of awards such as the Walkleys or the broadsheet analysis. The spark for Heinrichs' investigation was 'two paragraphs of comments buried in the third interim report to federal parliament of the Costigan royal commission'.\textsuperscript{53} That royal commission was largely the result of investigative efforts by freelance journalist David Richards writing for \textit{The Bulletin}. But because of the research design used here, the eventual story and its consequences for society was identified through the Walkleys and assessed by following its outcomes (and antecedents) through databases, newspaper archives and interviews.

Richards unearthed corruption within the Federated Ships, Painters and Dockers' Union. His 1980 four-part series published in Australia's oldest news magazine, \textit{The Bulletin} (1880-2008), was the ammunition the Fraser Government needed to launch the Costigan royal commission. Richards' research involved funeral parlour stake-outs, secret interviews at Pentridge with criminal Billy 'The Texan' Longley, and working closely with police. He uncovered murders, thefts and a 'ghosting' scheme where dock employees collected pay packets for hours not worked.\textsuperscript{54} The subsequent royal commission unearthed much more.

\textit{Union Murders and Mayhem (1980)}

The Costigan royal commission (1980-1984) found evidence of 36 murders and attempted murders of union associates. It also discovered wrongdoing beyond union ranks. It used advanced computer programming (for the time) to expose white-collar crime and the 'bottom

\textsuperscript{52} Heinrichs, P. 'Bottom of the Harbour Schemes,' \textit{National Times}, March to August 1982.
of the harbour' schemes. These schemes caused the Fraser Government to lose 'hundreds if not thousands of millions' in lost revenue. The final report, filling 20 volumes, led to the reversal of High Court tax decisions, and the establishment of the National Crime Authority. At one point, the reputation of media magnate Kerry Packer, ironically The Bulletin's owner, was called in to question. No charges were brought against Packer, and Fairfax apologised and recompensed him for failing to provide evidence to support the Commission's allegations. But, Packer was branded with the everlasting moniker, 'the Goanna'.

As Schultz and McKnight identified, new investigations sometimes developed from earlier stories. Heinrichs' story had built on the Costigan Commission's early findings, which had started from the work of Richards. Heinrichs brought new information to the public sphere that further exposed the extent of white-collar crime in Australia. This example also shows the value to the Australian public of media following up each other's significant stories.

Major media organisations argue that self-regulation is an important element of a free press, and the media are best able to judge what is in the public interest. But, it is not always a simple judgement. Sometimes the end is thought to justify the means. Take, for example, the investigative story known as 'The Age tapes' (1984). The paper faced a dilemma: to publish the transcripts of illegal NSW and Australian Federal Police recordings, or refrain because of their dubious acquisition and legal status. Interestingly, proving these decisions are not easy or uniform, the SMH chose not to publish.

In making these public interest decisions, Rusbridger's notions about the 'quality' of the target, and its relationship to the public interest returns. In this case, the quality of the 'target' was the integrity of senior figures in the judicial system.

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56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
Like Heinrichs' award-winning story, building on the work of Richards and the Costigan royal commission, 'The Age tapes' was the result of earlier work done by National Times' investigative journalists. Former SMH editor and founder of Private Media, which owns several news websites such as Crikey and the Power Index, Eric Beecher, said the National Times was an extraordinary newspaper that did some remarkable investigative stories:

It was vigorously independent, you have to remember Fairfax in those days was under a different ownership structure and independence was kind of emblematic of the whole place then — it is quite different now for all sorts of reasons — then, to create the National Times and put reasonable resources into it, and to genuinely support its independence was an extraordinary thing. So, I think it was probably the seminal journalistic enterprise of anyone's time really. There was no comparison.  

'The Age tapes' did not win a Walkley, but subsequent stories did, such as that of the National Times. Its investigator, Wendy Bacon, won the 1984 'Best Feature — Either in a Newspaper or Magazine' with the 'The Briese Affair: Wran's Worsening Crisis.' Bacon's page three story used secret tapes to reconstruct the 1979 drug prosecution case known as the Cessna-Milna case, which involved NSW chief magistrate Murray Farquhar. At the time, there were allegations of attempts to pervert the course of justice involving not only Farquhar, but also the then police commissioner Merv Wood and solicitor Morgan Ryan. But the NSW Government did not conduct a judicial investigation into the allegations at the time. The Bacon story, incidentally, did not pass the investigative test applied in this thesis, because it did not pass the mandatory fields for 'verifying information' or 'engaging in active reporting'.

Bacon herself did not feel it constituted investigative reporting. She recalled:

It is a very straightforward narrative wrap up of the story as far as I can remember from nearly 20 years ago. It was a specific form that I specialised in at that time but was not investigative... there needs to be some independent digging to produce something new and fresh not

60 Beecher, E. 'Interview with the author,' 12 May 2011.
61 Bacon, W. 'The Briese Affair: Wran's Worsening Crisis,' National Times, 17 August 1984, p. 3.
otherwise available. If a leak is just a source in context of other techniques then it can certainly be investigative ... As far as I remember Briese is a wrap up piece.63

But her story did add political pressure, as did 'The Age Tapes',64 and this led to the 1986 Stewart royal commission. More details about those tapes follow.

'The Age Tapes' (1983-84)

The controversial stories published as a three-part series headlined 'Network of Influence' documented links between organised crime in NSW, police and government, resulting in corruption allegations against former Attorney General and High Court judge Lionel Murphy. Bob Bottom, along with Lindsay Murdoch, and the late David Wilson wrote the series, continuing earlier work by Bottom and Wilkinson at the National Times in 1983. Former Age investigative journalist Paul Robinson recalled: 'Bob Bottom came to Melbourne with a big reputation, prodigious police and crime contacts and a cunning, politically astute mind.'65 He was able to get leaks of the transcripts of the illegal police telephone intercepts.

The transcripts were of calls between Justice Murphy and NSW solicitor Morgan Ryan, who was facing criminal charges at the time. Ryan became known in the media as the Judge's 'little mate'. Ryan had high-profile 'underworld' clients such as Abe Saffron and the transcript allegedly showed Ryan had sought information from the Judge about whether certain police were corruptible.66 Murphy was charged with attempting to pervert the course of justice and was tried twice: found guilty on the first hearing, but not guilty on the second. Incidentally, Ryan had been convicted in 1983 of conspiring to help 22 Koreans enter Australia illegally, but the conviction was quashed on appeal, and the retrial later dropped.67 The Age tapes led to seven separate inquiries and the royal commission. The NSW Government responded to the series by passing the Listening Devices Act 1984, to tighten the law.68

63 Bacon, W. 'Correspondence with the author,' 11 June 2012.
65 Robinson, P. 'Interview with the author,' 20 January 2012.
Before moving on, any discussion of *The Age* tapes story should also include the criticisms from Dr Jenny Hocking about the initial reporting by the *National Times*. In her biography about Lionel Murphy, Dr Hocking argued that the *National Times* journalists, for whatever reason knowingly or not, supported the political persecution of the High Court Judge, who was known to favour the left-wing of politics.69 Dr Hocking argued that at least twice Justice Murphy faced underhand efforts to remove him from the High Court, once in 1976 and again in 1984. Of the earlier attempt she argued that, 'whilst this initial action which could have dislodged Murphy was ultimately unsuccessful, it was not unconnected to the second attempt which began publicly with the cover story of the *National Times* in November 1983, "Big Shots Bugged".70

Certainly, the early 1980s produced consequential investigative journalism. It was also the peak for *The Age*’s circulation, with sales of 250,000 copies a day on weekdays.71 This decade, when advertising revenues were abundant, also saw television current affairs programs producing quality investigative reporting. Television reporting at this time proved that Sir Larry Lamb, the former editor of *The Australian* was wrong when in 1982 he told the *Bulletin* that 'television is no good at all at the big investigative type of story'.72

The ABC pioneered television investigative journalism, broadcasting *Four Corners* (1961), then *This Day Tonight* (1967-79) — the precursor to ABC's 7.30. Graeme Turner, who has tracked the rise and fall of current affairs television programming, wrote that 1967 — the same year that *The Age* began its specialist investigative unit 'Insight' — was about the time hard-hitting investigative reports replaced *This Day Tonight*'s polite interviews.73 In 1973, Mike Carlton, Stuart Littlemore and Bill Peach reported on illegal gambling in NSW. This marked the program's financial and editorial commitment to investigative reporting, argued Turner.74

70 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
An example of influential television investigative reporting in the 1980s, and also an example of Schultz's contention that journalists were building upon the investigative work that came before, was Chris Master's report for *Four Corners* about police corruption in Queensland: 'The Moonlight State'. But, it was another broadsheet journalist, the *Courier Mail*'s Phil Dickie, that secured the Walkley for his stories about the widespread corruption in Queensland in 1987.

*'The Moonlight State' (1987)*

Queensland's Fitzgerald Inquiry was sparked days after Masters' 'The Moonlight State' aired. This important story, separately investigated by Dickie, documented the role Queensland's senior police and government officials played in illegal drug, gambling and prostitution rackets. It resulted in the imprisonment of Police Commissioner, Sir Terence Lewis, jailing of several ministers, and later resignation of the Premier, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. What Dickie and Masters did was to firmly establish a pattern, and explain an historical context for how the corruption had been able to develop and flourish. Masters explained:

> It wasn't just the revelation of a set of facts that indicated that police and government had a corrupt relationship with criminal entities, etc; there was a three-dimensional story there about institutional corruption and the exploitation of public innocence. There was a history story there as well as a news story.\(^75\)

When interviewed for this thesis, former editor of the *National Times* Evan Whitton, argued that, up until Masters' and Dickie's investigations, the Queensland media had missed several opportunities to expose corrupt police in the northern state:

> In October 1981, Kevin Hooper told Parliament that Geraldo Bellino and Vittorio Conte were running illegal casinos in the Valley. Nothing happened. A report by Des Sturgess QC, leaked to the Press in February 1986, showed that patrons of an illegal casino had to walk past the open door of a brothel to get to the lavatory; corruption was a necessary inference. Nothing happened. Perhaps a factor was that journalists on late shifts used illegal casinos as private

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\(^75\) Masters, C. 'Interview with the author,' 15 February 2011.
Whiton said that it was not until March 1986 that the story started to gain momentum when the ABC's Quentin Dempster produced his television documentary, 'The Sunshine System, showed how Queensland had not worked properly for 70 years:77

Four Corners' Chris Masters and The Courier-Mail's Phil Dickie began looking into corruption in late 1986. Dickie began bombarding the masses with facts from the Sturgess Report about the brothel/corruption equation on 12 January 1987; the balloon went up when Four Corners, detonated Christopher Masters' The Moonlight State on 11 May 1987.78

However, in terms of television investigative reporting, Turner found that by the end of the 1980s when the Australian stock market collapsed, many award-winning investigative television programs were unable to hold audiences. Some were replaced with populist, tabloid formats offering consumer and celebrity stories.79 This was the case for Ten's Page One (1988-89) and its successor Public Eye (1989). Despite luring journalists such as Kerry O'Brien, Masters and Maxine McKew, they were unable to attract large audiences.80 The National Times broadsheet also closed. Vic Carroll said it fell victim to poor management by its owner during the stock market crash:

It closed because young Warwick Fairfax took the company over assuming he could sell the AFR, the National Times (by then Times on Sunday), BRW and other assets to Robert Holmes a Court to help satisfy his bankers. The stock market crashed in the middle of all this, Holmes a Court's fortune disappeared, young Warwick had no commitment to the National Times, and it was closed.81

In the early 1980s, with newspaper circulations booming, the relationship between profits and quality investigative reporting was not contentious. Eric Beecher said the peak of journalism resources was probably the late 1980s and 1990s. Quality investigative journalism, 'all gets

76 Whitton, E. 'Interview with the author,' 8 February 2012.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Carroll, V. J. cited in Whitton, E. 'Interview with the author,’ 8 February 2012.
back to money, that is what it is about,' he argued. 'Part of it is the ability to fail and not produce results. Part of the nature of the longer form is trawling the research, not knowing the outcome. And if there isn't an outcome you don't have to publish,' he stated.  

Schultz also described the media in the 1980s as having become 'equal contenders' with authoritative powers, and the 1980s investigative examples provided here show this. The Walkley data also demonstrated that, in line with Schultz's work, crime and corruption was the dominant genre of broadsheets' investigative reporting. However, arguably, earlier examples of investigative journalism from the 1970s, such as Peter Game's 'Khemlani tells', suggest the shift to equality between authority figures and the media started earlier than the 1980s.

**Investigative Journalism in the 1990s**

ABC *Media Watch* host Jonathan Holmes observed that 1990s investigative reporters were slow to expose corporate wrongdoers as financial dramas unfolded such as the collapse of Victoria's Pyramid Building Society: 'The big bank collapses that happened in Victoria and South Australia went largely unnoticed and were not exposed by anyone's journalism as they should have been.'  

In Holmes' view — with some exceptions like journalist Paul Barry's exposé of the dodgy dealings of billionaire Alan Bond — it was not investigative journalism's best decade.

The thesis results from studying Walkley winners showed that it was true that corporate investigations barely featured during this time (see Figure 7.2). The broadsheet study (which does not include the *AFR*) also showed no evidence of financial or corporate investigations (see Figure 7.3). It is important to highlight that these findings about corporate reporting reveal a troubling trend about business reporting in Australia.

82 Beecher, E. 'Interview with the author,' 12 May 2011.
83 Holmes, J. 'Interview with the author,' 19 December 2011.
84 Ibid.
Jennifer Kitchener, writing on this subject in the 1990s, argued, like Holmes, that investigative reporting of the financial sector improved because of their failures to identify corporate wrongdoing: 'In the aftermath of the financial collapses and economic downturn that marked the end of the decade, corporate Australia and the media started to steer a more measured course.'\(^8^5\) The findings here show this to be true in the case of the AFR's reporting towards the end of the 1990s.

Kitchener also observed that companies and, the financial institutions that funded them, became more risk-adverse after the 1980s and that, while economic rationalism survived into the 1990s, checks and balances on the marketplace through regulation became more popular.\(^8^6\) She argued that in the 1990s corporate legislation and professional standards were strengthened and penalties for negligence and wrongdoing toughened. But, Kitchener cautioned: 'nevertheless, the preconditions exist for the media to repeat their poor performance of the 1980s.'\(^8^7\)

Internationally, history has shown Kitchener to be correct. The mainstream US media failed to anticipate the Global Financial Crisis (2007), and the Asian Financial Crisis (1997) in the preceding decade.\(^8^8\) Nobel Prize winner in Economics (2001) Joseph Stiglitz describes that 'overall, the press acted more like a cheerleader as the bubble grew than like a check … so too, in the aftermath of the [GFC], it has provided both less analysis and less investigative reporting than one might have hoped.'\(^8^9\)

This thesis found that, in the 1990s, the mainstream media was not investigating financial stories but instead reporting on a mix of subject targets, with a greater focus on state political issues. For the first time, state and federal political issues were equal in winning Walkley

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\(^8^6\) Ibid.
\(^8^7\) Ibid.
awards for investigative journalism, more so than any other subject. Yet, federal politics did not show up in the broadsheet study. A reason for this is that the AFR won the most awards in the 1990s for investigative federal political issues, and this tabloid masthead was not recorded in the broadsheet study.

Several mastheads focused on state political issues in this decade, including: The Sunday Age, The Adelaide Advertiser, The Age and Courier Mail. Both News Limited newspapers, the Adelaide Advertiser and Courier Mail, were broadsheets at this time. The Adelaide Advertiser became tabloid in 1997, and the Courier Mail converted in 2006. Both stopped producing Walkley award-winning investigative journalism, according to the definition used here, when they switched to tabloid form.

The 1990s results illustrate that the 'profit controversy' — or what O'Donnell et al. described as the contest between newspaper profitability and their future capability to maintain a public interest role — was impacting on investigative journalism as evidenced by the disappearance of some 'target' subjects. In particular, a lack of corporate and financial investigations could suggest that newspapers were careful not to upset corporate advertisers with too much scrutiny of the sector's commercial transactions. This analysis of the finding supports the political economic theory of Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky when they identified that the commercial media activate self-serving filters in deciding what has news value, and one of these is informed by advertising as a primary media income source.

Stiglitz also argued that during the GFC the media, both mainstream and financial, for many reasons had become captive to their sources, including succumbing to 'strong incentives for the media not to serve as part of society's systems of checks and balances.'

While Chapter Five showed that the amount of investigative journalism did not suffer as anticipated when newspaper industry profitability fell, this chapter showed that the targets of investigations did change. International investigative stories, which incur probably the highest expenses of all investigative stories, were fewer in the 1990s. While local stories

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about state issues, which have no great travel costs, increased in frequency. Similarly, crime investigative stories continued to feature in the 1990s but, as with political stories, were most often localised to the state. These results are interpreted in the context that before 2010 the steepest fall in Australian newspaper sales occurred between 1990 and 2000.  

Two broadsheets that produced more award-winning investigative stories than any other masthead for this decade were the *Sunday Age* and the *Courier Mail*. Among these mastheads' celebrated investigations was the *Courier Mail*'s 'Net Bet Affair'. Paul Whittaker and Hedley Thomas, both multi-Walkley award winners, under the tenacious, and sometimes controversial editorship of Chris Mitchell (now the editor of *The Australian*), teamed up to investigate this story.

**The 'Net Bet Affair' (1999)**

In 1999, Whittaker and Thomas found that the company that won Queensland's first Internet gaming licence was linked to three Labor Party figures set to financially prosper from the deal. The then ALP Treasurer David Hamill, who oversaw the contract, was forced to stand down as a result of the newspaper's investigations, but later cleared of wrongdoing. The Criminal Justice Commission and state Auditor General launched independent inquiries. The inquiries investigated backbencher Bill D'Arcy, former Ipswich West MP Don Livingstone, and former Ipswich City councillor Paul Pisasale, each owning a stake in the Internet gaming company. The MPs were forced to sell their interests worth an estimated $7 million after it was confirmed that they held shares in Navari Pty Ltd, a property investment company, which had a 12 percent stake in the gaming company, Gocorp. All were eventually cleared of wrongdoing by the inquiries, but D'Arcy was later convicted on unrelated child sex charges and jailed. This story shows that although the eventual outcome was overturned, the newspaper gave the public greater transparency of MPs' business, something the government should have provided in the first place.

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93 Simons, M. *The Content Makers: Understanding the Media in Australia*, p. 29.
Another *Courier Mail* example from the 1990s, was the Gold Walkley awarded to David Bentley's investigation exposing author Helen Darville as a literary hoax.⁹⁶ She wrote the book *The Hand that Signed the Paper* claiming to be Helen Demidenko, an author with Ukrainian heritage writing from family experience about the Holocaust. This investigation was interesting also because it involved a reconstruction of historical facts already in the public sphere. Bentley was able to show that Helen Demidenko was really Helen Darville, a suburban Australian author purporting to own a rich, exotic history that did not belong to her. The 1990s was the only era where 'reconstruction of events', using the Tiffin typology, was the most popular type of investigation.

Similarly, the *Sunday Age* contributed several important award-winning investigations including 'Experts slam disabled "charade"' — a 1991 Paul Heinrichs investigation for the *Sunday Age* into the merits of facilitated communication of non-verbal disabled residents in state institutions⁹⁷ — and Paul Robinson's three-month investigation into Australian sex tourism in Thailand and the Philippines.⁹⁸

Robinson's exposé led to the enactment of new laws making it an offence to commit sexual offences against children while travelling abroad. Robinson said that none of the *Sunday Age's* investigative stories would have 'seen the light of day' without the strong support of its then editor Bruce Guthrie, who, 'made the *Sunday Age* one of the fastest growing and ground breaking newspapers of its era'. Robinson said his and the paper's investigations involved risk, careful and detailed research, and the use of contacts built up over decades:

> They exposed the lengths governments and corporations would go to get rid of people perceived to be opposed to their interests. And, in the case of the sex tourism investigation, led to new laws aimed at preventing illegal behaviour.⁹⁹

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⁹⁸ Robinson, P. 'Interview with the author,' 20 January 2012.
⁹⁹ Ibid.
Bruce Guthrie said he was determined to make the *Sunday Age* the best newspaper in Australia, and he knew that investigative journalism, although not popular with the sales and marketing team that sell advertisements, was important for achieving that goal. He wanted to deliver journalism that couldn't be ignored.\(^{100}\)

Newspaper campaigns such as these rarely sell extra copies but if properly executed they can certainly build a brand. But an editor has to be careful to pick a fight that is both winnable and in step with readers' expectations and aspirations.\(^{101}\)

While these two papers, the *Courier Mail* and *Sunday Age*, were successful investigators, more generally, editors in the 1990s were looking to magazine-styled feature and entertainment stories to bolster flagging circulations.\(^{102}\) Newspapers grew fatter as they filled with numerous pullout lifestyle sections and, like television current affairs at this time, they lost circulation and audience share. Even *60 Minutes* lost its ratings dominance in the 1990s.\(^{103}\)

The 1990s was a tumultuous time for newspapers. All of Australia's evening newspapers closed,\(^{104}\) along with some weekend newspapers such as Melbourne's *Sunday Herald*. The *Sunday Sun* also changed its content to become the *Sunday Herald Sun*, now an unapologetic populist tabloid.\(^{105}\) The 1991 recession hurt the Herald and Weekly Times newspapers owned by Rupert Murdoch. In six months he lost three mastheads.\(^{106}\) Murdoch was financially exposed in three countries affected by the recession: Australia, the US and Britain. Rival newspaper *The Age* reported at the time the closure of the *Sunday Herald*:

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\(^{100}\) Guthrie, B. 'Interview with the author,' 11 February 2010.


\(^{105}\) Guthrie, B. *Man Bites Murdoch*, p. 126.

\(^{106}\) Carney, S. 'Losses Kill Another Newspaper Dream,' *The Age*, 4 April 1991, p. 4.
The 1990s showed investigative journalism in the main had become more local. At this time, concerns about falling profitability of newspaper businesses and the consequences of that for defending society's public interests, were warranted. Both the 1981 Victorian inquiry into the print media, and the 1992 Federal House of Representatives select committee report found that the 'Australian print media industry is highly concentrated.'\textsuperscript{107} Both inquiries expressed concern about the consequences of Australia's increasingly concentrated media ownership had for diversity of opinion, and news story selection.

Certainly, the 1990s was a time of change for investigative journalism with more local investigations appearing in the newspapers. Of course there were still examples of other types of investigations such as Robinson's paedophiles abroad investigation, which led to important national law reform. Also, earlier chapters showed that the amount of investigative journalism being produced did not decrease among the broadsheets at this time. Thus, the publishers' view as cited by O'Donnell et al. that falling profitability in itself 'should not be seen, automatically, as a cause for alarm or a fall in standards'\textsuperscript{108} is not unreasonable, as will be discussed in the next section examining the investigative journalism of the 2000s.


Investigative Journalism in the 2000s

The writing style of stories in the 2000s showed more opinion and commentary threaded throughout the facts of the story. Readers were being told not just the facts, but how to interpret the facts, as noted earlier in reference to Stephen Cushion. For example, *The Australian’s* investigative series about the Australian Wheat Board, which was found to have paid kickbacks to the Saddam Hussein Government in Iraq in exchange for wheat contracts, has the following editorial tone, yet the story does not purport to be an opinion or commentary piece:

The Government's approach to the wheat kickback scandal shows a silo mentality, writes Caroline Overington ... In defining the terms of reference so tightly, Howard hopes to shield his Government from scrutiny. There is good reason for that: Howard does not want there to be any suggestion that his Government knew that the Australian Wheat Board, in a mad effort to keep its wheat contracts, was still funnelling hundreds of millions of dollars to Saddam's regime as Howard was considering sending Australian troops to Iraq to unseat the dictator.109

This story was an investigative feature story in the 'Inquirer' section of the newspaper's weekend edition. This example shows that the context of investigative journalism within the newspaper has altered and, in this case, took a strong editorial line.

In the 2000s, all news stories carried a byline, and picture bylines (a dinkus) had become more prevalent than previously. *The Age* redesigned its paper in 2000, discarding its traditional British-styled broadsheet coat-of-arms, to modernise it in the fashion of USA Today, using block blue colour. This proved unpopular with the readers and it reverted back to its traditional masthead several years later. In this decade, colour is used extensively throughout the SMH and The Age. Unlike in 1991, the qualitative analysis of the 2001 broadsheets showed that Fairfax's 'Good Weekend' magazine was more about feature stories than it was about investigations.

*The Australian* also used picture bylines and ran feature series on topics such as: 'Saving the Murray River' and the 'Inside Story, How Pell Got the Archdiocese of Sydney'. Across all the broadsheets, feature stories and pullout sections were in vogue. Each paper had a different section for each day of the week, and features were centred on big issues of the day. For example, *The Australian* celebrated the anniversary of Federation with a six-part series headlined: 'How we rate on the world stage.' Unlike investigative stories, which reveal a transgression of some sort, feature stories generally do not. They offer insights into a topic, and are usually well-constructed pieces by senior writers, but do not contain exclusive revelations.

The Walkley research here found that the number of corporate and crime stories had increased in this decade. The broadsheet study showed more of a general mix of stories, with a notable absence of corporate investigations, and a return to international investigative stories. The two data sets diverge most on the representation of corporate, crime and international investigations (see Figure 7.6). The rise in award-winning corporate stories in the 2000s was largely due to the contributions of the *AFR*, which was not included in the broadsheet study. The *AFR* had significantly increased its investigative efforts in the 2000s, and won as many Walkleys as its Fairfax stablemates: *The Age* and *The SMH*. This might be in response to the major company collapses that were not foreseen in the 1990s, in the words of Holmes, 'as they should have been', particularly by a financial newspaper caught off guard. In the 2000s, the *AFR* produced three times as many business investigative reports than any other masthead.
While the *AFR* is producing investigations of the corporate sector, it is a specialist newspaper, largely speaking to a niche business-minded audience and, that audience is shrinking; it has lost 30,000 hardcopy readers in the past four years.\(^{110}\) It is concerning that the *AFR* stories that do hold corporate power to account might not be reaching a broader mainstream audience. Further, it is disquieting that there is little evidence that the nation's major broadsheets are critiquing the business community. The results suggest that the mainstream media have not scrutinised corporate power in the way that they should have.

However, the prominence of the *AFR* as an investigator does show that a tabloid, albeit a niche tabloid, can do investigative journalism as well as any other newspaper when it has an editorial team committed to this type of reporting. It might also somewhat ironically have been less hamstrung to scrutinise business because in the 2000s it was the only major daily newspaper in Australia that made a profit out of its circulation alone, without requiring advertising subsidises for its journalism.\(^{111}\) Eric Beecher said about the newspaper that despite falling circulation and advertising revenues, 'the Financial Review still makes a reasonable profit, but it is substantially lower than it ever was, and I don't think anyone for a moment


\(^{111}\) Beecher, E. 'Interview with the author,' 12 May 2011.
thinks it will ever grow back to where it was ... but they actually do make a profit out of circulation.\textsuperscript{112}

Michael Schudson noted that profit from advertising can create a paradoxical situation whereby the more successful a newspaper was financially, the less it had to worry about advertisers putting on pressure about its editorial content.\textsuperscript{113} The \textit{AFR} might be an example of this paradox in the 2000s. Its award-winning efforts included, as mentioned in the previous Chapter: 'Rivkin's Swiss Bank Scandal', 'The Robert Gerard Tax Scandal', 'Inside Job: Who Killed Opes Prime', and 'ASIC Knew About Storm for Months'.\textsuperscript{114}

Through the research of the Walkley Awards, this thesis has shown that compared to broadsheets, general tabloids over the years tend not to focus as heavily on investigative journalism. Award-winning crime stories account for a third of the studied Walkley investigative stories for the decade (see Table 7.1), and two-thirds belong to broadsheets.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{113} Schudson, M. \textit{The Sociology of News}, p. 126.
Table 7.1: A List of Walkley Winning Crime Stories in the 2000s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Masthead</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Journalist</th>
<th>Award</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>The Age online</td>
<td>Made in Australia</td>
<td>Hamish Fitzsimmons &amp; Mark Forbes</td>
<td>Online Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>The Daily Telegraph</td>
<td>Heartbreak Hotel</td>
<td>Adam Harvey</td>
<td>Newspaper Feature Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The Age</td>
<td>Geoff Clark: Power &amp; Rape</td>
<td>Andrew Rule</td>
<td>Investigative Reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The Age</td>
<td>Geoff Clark: Power &amp; Rape</td>
<td>Andrew Rule</td>
<td>Gold Walkley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>The Illawarra Mercury</td>
<td>Prostituted</td>
<td>Jenny Dennis</td>
<td>Investigative Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>The Courier Mail</td>
<td>Exposing a Sick System</td>
<td>Hedley Thomas</td>
<td>News Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>The Daily Telegraph</td>
<td>Marcus Einfield</td>
<td>Michael Beach &amp; Viva Goldner</td>
<td>Print News Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>The Australian</td>
<td>Dr Haneef</td>
<td>Hedley Thomas</td>
<td>Print News Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>The Age</td>
<td>Mokbel’s Day at the Races</td>
<td>Nick McKenzie</td>
<td>Sport News Reporting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author*

One crime investigative story with significant public interest outcomes was Hedley Thomas' story about Indian-born Dr Mohamed Haneef, who was detained on suspicion of terrorist activities in early July 2007. It is used as a case study here because it went against the political establishment's view that Haneef was guilty and investigated the case to challenge that proposition successfully.

**Dr Haneef (2007)**

Dr Haneef was a distant relative (second cousin) of two men who attacked the Glasgow International airport with a car bomb in June 2007. Dr Haneef was working at a Queensland hospital and was on his way home to India to visit his newborn child when police arrested him at the Brisbane International airport. He was detained for 12 days, which was the longest any suspect had been held without charge in recent Australian history. New terror laws were then used to charge Dr Haneef. A subsequent Rudd Government inquiry into the arrest of Dr Haneef had found that public comments by authorities at the time, including former

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116 Ibid.
Attorney-General Philip Ruddock, former Prime Minister John Howard and former Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty suggested that the appropriate statutory tests were not applied in detaining Dr Haneef, and that he was being held 'just in case' he was involved in the overseas attack, rather than based on evidence at the time. In an interview with the *Bulletin* months later remarkably Keelty stated: 'I was surprised as anybody when the DPP advised that Haneef could be charged. Because I didn't think the evidence was strong enough.' Hedley Thomas, interviewed for this research, said he believed that journalists had let the public down with their unquestioning reporting of the Haneef affair:

In that story there was so much garbage written by many journalists who were just taking the official line, and embellishing it and quoting secret sources. It just became this sort of feeding frenzy that was over the top and it obviously suited, in my view, the people, the ministers who were directly involved, and the then commissioner of the AFP. I just think it was a really gross performance by some of the journalists involved, by gross, I mean quite unfactual. There were stories, for example, in the Sunday papers that Haneef was suspected of a plan to blow up a Gold Coast skyscraper because he was photographed on the beach with his wife, and this sort of stuff. This became front page news and I was just appalled by it. That was a classic example of a failure of the media to be sufficiently contrary, and questioning of the official line.

Thomas' stories exposed the weaknesses in the terrorist-related charges against the doctor, which led to Haneef's release, and eventually reinstatement of his cancelled visa. Dr Haneef's passport was returned and he flew home to India at the end of July 2007. Since these events, Dr Haneef has returned to Australia, and pursued damages against the Commonwealth for his ordeal. He was compensated for a confidential sum believed to be $1 million.

This story demonstrates what investigative journalism can do, no matter how uncomfortable the truth for authorities. Hedley Thomas said that he never sought an interview with Dr Haneef, because he did not want to allow such a meeting to influence his gathering of facts.

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119 Thomas, H. 'Interview with the author,' 18 July 2012.
Thomas stated:

I don't want to talk to anyone I am seeking comment from either on or off the record until I understand really, really well what their angle is, what their background is, where they have come from and where do they work. So, I might spend days just looking in whatever archives I can lay my hands on, for material that will help me understand that. It might involve going back to the old-fashioned clippings libraries and searching legal judgements and so on. I really enjoy just going back and reading exhibits and statements and looking for discrepancies and putting together material almost like a sort of in a documentary matrix, because documentary material is usually more truthful because often it is contemporaneous. Like Haneef, for example, I still have not met Mohamad, I have had opportunities to, I didn't really feel I had to meet him to understand what was going on. I needed to understand the legal brief of evidence, such that it was, and so you know journalists can become unfortunately influenced by the process of the interview and sometimes the emotional connection.\textsuperscript{121}

Crime stories dominated the 2000s, and this might be because they are popular with readers who might enjoy the vicariousness of reading about the dark path of criminal lives, unfamiliar and disconnected from their own. They are usually popular news stories online, and financial pressures on the media might make them part of a self-serving cycle whereby editors encourage these stories because they deliver advertising 'eyeballs'. These stories often rank within the top five stories listed at the bottom of mastheads' websites. Crime stories also fit with Schudson et al.'s arguments about the increasing trend toward tabloidisation of the media, of which crime stories are a feature. Schudson cites political scientist Thomas Patterson who found, in accordance with British and Swedish studies, that soft news stories had increased in recent decades as had 'negative news and crime reporting'.\textsuperscript{122}

Earlier, Figure 7.6 was also useful for showing which topics were winning awards (in red) compared to which subjects the broadsheets were investigating. It can be seen that corporate and crime investigative stories do attract awards. The Walkley crime story total was greater than the broadsheet study, but this is expected because the Walkley sample also included tabloids, of which a third of the winning crime stories came from tabloid newspapers. It can

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Schudson, M. \textit{The Sociology of News}, 2003, p. 98.
also be seen that state political issues and international issues were investigative targets for the broadsheets, but poorly recognized through awards.

Compared to past years, international stories in both data sets were written by foreign correspondents. From the broadsheet study, the investigations included: Hamish McDonald's 'Architects of Mass Murder' about Indonesia's role in the East Timor massacres of the 1990s (Fairfax); Lindsay Murdoch's (Fairfax) 'The Stolen Children of Timor' and his 'Conspiracy of Silence: Searching for Truth in Timor' (*The Age*) also about atrocities in East Timor. *The Australian* contributed 'Gunboat Diplomacy' about Australia's questionable role maintaining security in the Solomon Islands by Mary-Louise O'Callaghan.123

The broadsheet international investigations were more frequent than the previous decade. This could be because the 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States cast Australian's attention beyond its own shores; also regional issues came to prominence such as East Timor's independence from Indonesia in 2002 and the preceding massacre of 1400 people in 1999 leading up to the UN-backed referendum. Of the Walkley international investigations, all were Fairfax stories and half were syndicated between *The Age* and the *SMH*. They were: Paul McGeough's 'Afghanistan and the War on Terrorism' (*SMH* 2001); Hamish McDonald's 'What's Wrong With Falun Gong?' (Fairfax 2004); Paul McGeough et al's story 'The Iraq DVDs and the War of Ideas' (*SMH* 2006); and John Garnaut and Mathew Murphy's 'Rio Tinto Executives Detained in China' (Fairfax 2009).124 Unlike in the 1960s when editors selected senior journalists to travel overseas for a specific story, these stories were all written by foreign correspondents based in either the Middle East or China. These two foreign bureaus have not closed due to cost cutting, and would be unlikely to because of their strategic importance for covering Australia's economic and diplomatic security within the international arena. The use of foreign correspondents for investigations indicates that broadsheet editors were maximising limited resources. Further, earlier in this chapter, it was


shown that 'stringers' and wire services were used to gather and report general foreign news, thus freeing up foreign correspondents to produce lengthier investigative reports. For added value, the majority of these investigative foreign stories were also syndicated across the Fairfax mastheads, which did not occur in past decades. This shows a new adaptation that has enabled investigative journalism to continue to be produced in greater quantities than previous decades.

**Investigative Journalism 2010-**

The research showed that broadsheet investigative stories were distributed across a broad set of topics in 2011, with a slight preference for investigations of statutory authorities. Perhaps one of the more consequential stories, and an example of an investigation of a statutory authority, was 'The Money Makers'.125 This series of stories about Reserve Bank subsidiaries, Securency and Note Printing Australia, led to several people being charged, and the enactment for the first time of laws against bribery committed overseas (see Chapter Five).

Similarly, online investigations also covered a range of subjects. However, the sample was small. The investigative stories were spread across issues involving the federal government, international, statutory authorities, state government issues, and also the *WikiLeaks* files (categorised as 'other'), see Figure 7.7.

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One final point about investigative journalism in 2011 relates again to the Tiffen typology. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, Tiffen argued that investigative stories that delivered 'new information' were the least common type of investigation, but they were pivotal for delivering information into the public sphere that would not otherwise be known without a journalist's investigative effort. Often, he argued, these types of stories were difficult to authenticate, and there was no guarantee that a story would result from the investigation. It would be reasonable to presume that because investigative journalism is expensive, these types of stories might be less frequent in 2011. They also have the innate risk of expending resources, time and money pursuing false leads. In fact, the Walkley data for the 2010s — which includes only two years in this present decade — showed investigations about 'new information' far exceeded all previous decades since the Walkleys began (see Figure 7.8). The sort of 'new information' the stories uncovered included rorting within the Federal defence force and rorting of Rugby's Melbourne Storm salary cap; shonky New South Wales Government land deals for $1; the revelation that the Rudd Government would remove the Emissions Trading Scheme from its first term agenda, the Reserve Bank

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126 Ibid., p. 33-34.
subsidiaries international bribery scandal, and the shady business dealings of the late Melbourne billionaire Richard Pratt.\textsuperscript{127}

Figure 7.8: Tifen’s Typology: Stories That Find ‘New Information’, 2010-2011

Figure 7.8 showed something encouraging for print investigative journalism: that editors were still making this genre of journalism a priority in 2011, despite falls in operational revenues. This was a point emphasised by then national editor overseeing Fairfax Media’s investigative unit Mark Baker: ‘We are spending more on investigative journalism I would say than ever in the history of the newspaper.’\textsuperscript{128}

However, there is a caveat to this observation. Since Mark Baker's comments, Fairfax and News Limited, along with Channel Ten announced in 2012 that they would all downsize their operations, cutting more than 3000 staff between them, and an estimated 800 employees from editorial floors. According to Chris Warren at the journalist's union, the MEAA, 10 per cent


\textsuperscript{128} Baker, M. 'Interview with the author,' 11 January 2012.
of Australia's reporters are being made redundant. What this chapter can affirm is that, up until the end of 2011, editors were finding ways to address the 'profit controversy' to continue to deliver investigative journalism. This genre of reporting was still an editorial priority for broadsheets. Up until this point, the tension between profit and quality investigative reporting was not found to be a simple inverse relationship. It did impact on some story topics, which were conspicuously absent, such as the scrutiny of the corporate and financial sector by the daily broadsheets. Further, after the 2012 job cuts take effect, investigative journalism might reach its 'tipping point' whereby the concerns of O'Donnell et al. are actualised, and readers and the public sphere encounter a measurable 'fall in standards' of investigative journalism. But, this chapter has shown that, while there have been changes to investigative journalism over the years, a significant 'fall in standards' had not happened yet, as of the beginning of 2012.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to address the question: How have broadsheets contributed investigative journalism to the public sphere to influence Australian democratic society? This chapter examined some outcomes of investigative journalism of broadsheets and beyond, and has shown significant societal outcomes have occurred because of investigative journalism.

From the 1960s, broadsheet investigative journalism exclusively gave readers a greater appreciation of their regional neighbours. This included stories about New Guinea, the war in Vietnam and apartheid in South Africa. The scrutiny of apartheid helped lay the foundations for Australia to reconsider its own 'White Australia' policy. Hurst's insights into the devastation of the Vietnam War on North Vietnam also showed the futility of war and how the 'enemy' suffered too. The style of journalism was descriptive, with long passages and viewed through the eyes of the reporter.

In the 1970s, investigative reporting became more investigative, with a peak in the number of stories unearthing 'new information'. In this era, stories were most often about corporate and

federal political power. The consequences of broadsheets' investigations, such as unearthing the Whitlam Government's unconventional loans scheme, and the Victorian Government's corrupt housing commission land deals, provided greater transparency for the electorate and contributed to these governments' demise. The 1970s and 1980s saw greater experimentation with writing styles and the introduction of 'new journalism' techniques.

The 1970s investigations paved the way for more detailed crime and corruption stories in the 1980s. The Queensland Government paid the ultimate price when Phil Dickie at the then broadsheet the *Courier Mail* and the ABC's Chris Masters separately shone the spotlight on the links between police corruption and illegal prostitution and gambling rackets in that state. This decade also marked the power of television investigative journalism, and proved beyond doubt that the media had become equal contenders with authorities, rather than subservient purveyors of their messages.

The targets of broadsheet investigative journalism in the 1990s was telling of the growing tension between profitability and investigations, but it did not end important contributions. The focus of investigations was still crime and corruption, but overall, it became more state-based. Corporate and international investigations faded (with exceptions like Paul Robinson's holiday paedophile story). Editors that gave some priority to investigative journalism, such as Bruce Guthrie then at the *Sunday Age*, and Chris Mitchell at the *Courier Mail*, produced more award-winning investigations than any other broadsheets for that decade.

Investigative journalism in the first decade of the third millennium indicated that Schudson, Franklin and other academics' arguments about the rise of tabloidisation of broadsheets and the invention of the 'broadloid' in the United States and Britain, had also become a phenomenon in Australia. Crime stories made up the largest part of the general mix of investigations. These stories were popular, and regularly attracted large online audiences. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the regional disruption to international order with East Timor seceding from Indonesia in 2002, saw a rise in international investigations. But, unlike the 1960s, this time the stories were written by foreign correspondents as opposed to the more expensive option of sending a senior journalist to the region to report the story. There is nothing measurably inferior about these stories, but it does show that editors were
making practical decisions in order to continue unique foreign coverage in their pages. Another observable fact arising out of the 2000s, was the significant contributions of the financial tabloid, the AFR, to corporate investigate journalism. During this period, broadsheets' coverage of these investigations was conspicuously absent.

Thus, this chapter has shown that there were detectable changes in investigative journalism since the 1960s. It has also shown that investigative journalism can, and has, delivered public interest information that contributes to the accountability and transparency needed for a well-functioning democracy. The examples showed that the broadsheet media have at times performed effectively in their role as the Fourth Estate, delivering the public sphere with information that would not otherwise be known. But, it has also shown that tension exists between profitability and investigative journalism of consequence since the 1990s. Editors have adapted to changed economic conditions within their mastheads, seemingly to minimise its impact on investigative journalism. This has been seen through the sharing of resources via syndication; using existing resources, such as foreign bureaus for investigative stories; and focusing on specific subjects likely to deliver outcomes, such as popular crime and local investigations.

According to Eric Beecher, journalism today is, in many ways, better than in the past:

> The kind of journalism that is practised now, is more ambitious compared to the past. The problem is that is an absolute judgement. The relative judgement is compared to everything that is around now, it means that the journalism in the newspapers has to be vastly better because the competition is so much greater, not only from the Internet, but also, the ABC is a vastly better producer of journalism now than it was.  

The analysis of investigative journalism over the years, and using the Tiffen typology, supports Beecher's viewpoint. It found an upward trend whereby more of journalists' investigations were unearthing 'new information'. This was contrary to what this author expected as broadsheets' revenues have declined over time. Even in 2010 and 2011 there are

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130 Beecher, E. 'Interview with the author,' 12 May 2011.
more investigative stories that uncovered 'new information' than previous years. But, as Beecher argued, and as the previous results chapters have discussed, with the level of news competition in the public sphere, investigative journalism from newspapers might not be having the same impact as it once did, unless the journalism is particularly extraordinary. 'The Money Makers' is perhaps one example of a contemporaneous broadsheet investigation that has risen beyond the everyday noise of the media, although even then this series has taken three years to gain widespread attention. It is a story that has had consequences, with several Note Print Australia managers charged with bribing officials in Malaysia and Nepal as part of a criminal inquiry that began in 2009.

In sum, since the 1960s it has been shown that broadsheets have contributed investigative journalism to the public sphere, and at times improved the transparency and accountability of the powerful within Australian democratic society. The given examples suggest that without these investigative journalism contributions, our democratic society would be the poorer for it. The next chapter will probe the question of future sources and the trends for investigative journalism. It will examine the capacity of media beyond broadsheets to contribute investigative journalism. This is an important question, particularly if broadsheets continue their economic decline.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Print and Digital: Emerging Trends of Investigative Journalism

Introduction

This thesis has so far examined the past and present states of print and broadsheet investigative journalism. It has found that both the quality and quantity of print investigative journalism is greater than some academic and media commentaries suggest in the context of falling newspaper circulations and revenues. In Australia, the quantity is greater than past years and, while the qualitative features of investigative journalism have changed there is no overwhelming evidence at the end of this data collection in 2011 to indicate a significant 'fall in standards' of this type of public interest reporting, other than the absence of evidence for scrutiny by broadsheets of the corporate sector.

This chapter, then, will look to the emerging trends and the future for broadsheet investigative journalism. Specifically, it will consider the two remaining unanswered research questions. They are: is the public sphere receiving, and benefitting, from new sources of investigative journalism in Australia; and if so, how does it compare to print broadsheet contributions? Second, are media institutions (still) important for producing investigative journalism?

These questions depart from the past, where evidence for this thesis has been focused. This chapter will gradually move away from the specific, focused quantitative findings of the previous results chapters and, in the second half of this chapter, discuss what the future might hold for broadsheet investigative journalism, and investigative journalism more generally. This will be done by firstly considering evidence for broadsheets' trajectory towards the tabloidisation of their general news pages, together with recent print media announcements

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about downsizing of newsrooms and changes to newspaper formats. This will provide an important context for considering the future direction of Australian investigative journalism and challenges to broadsheets in producing it. It has already been established that Australia's major print institutions are economically weaker than in the past, and this chapter will consider the importance of media institutions in providing investigative journalism to the public sphere. It will discuss various ways in which these weakened institutions are adapting to continue to provide investigative journalism, and it will examine the capacity of various non-institutional media to assist in delivering investigative journalism. Clearly, one of the key questions for the future of institutional (traditional) and non-institutional (new) media in providing the public sphere with investigative journalism is their funding source. So, this chapter also considers how future investigative journalism might be funded.

The 'Tabloidisation' of Australian Broadsheets

Media scholar Bob Franklin (see Chapter Three) identified a widespread Western trend in newspapers sometimes called 'newszak' or 'tabloidisation', together with the emergence of the 'broadloid'. This is characterised by a more 'downmarket' approach to news in attempts to lift reader numbers, and thus improve advertising and circulation revenues. The changes Franklin described related to the style and content of newspapers. Franklin was referring to British mastheads when he wrote in 2008 that: 'old broadsheets [are] as likely as the red tops to use tabloid-style banner headlines, alliterative and punny headlines, large print, less text, shorter words, bigger pictures, colour pictures and more of them'.

This study also measured some tabloid features and found elements of 'newszak' in Australian broadsheets from 1971 to 2011. These changes were identified in the mastheads' front pages and include: page one pictures are larger, more advertising, and fewer stories (see Figure 8.1). These changes were more prevalent from 1991, which coincides with the beginning of marked circulation and revenue declines. In terms of fewer stories and larger pictures, these trends were reflected on news pages three and five of the studied broadsheets.

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4 Ibid.
Advertising actually took up less space on these inside news pages in 2011 compared to 1971. This is most likely because modern editors consider these as 'premium' news pages, and because pagination had significantly increased, specialist sections could accommodate extra, more targeted advertising. Former SMH editor Eric Beecher said newspapers had vastly fewer pages before the mid-1980s, but grew fatter as more sections were introduced:

When I came to SMH in the 1980s, my first job was to actually start those sections ... it was a two-section newspaper then. It had news and sport. The news holes were much smaller. They are probably getting back to that now, to what they were, with the decline.⁵

When interviewed for this thesis, MEAA representative Louise Connor observed that newspaper pagination and Australia's full-time journalist numbers were decreasing. This suggests advertising might start to increase on premium news pages, but it had not by 2011.⁶ Figure 8.1 is an aggregate of the broadsheets showing that the proportion of front pages dedicated to images, has increased with time (red line). Also, the proportion of advertising has increased (green line), while the number of stories on page one are fewer, although generally not any longer in word length, (blue line).

Figure 8.1: The Tabloidisation Drift: Front Page of Australian Broadsheets, 1971-2011

![Figure 8.1: The Tabloidisation Drift: Front Page of Australian Broadsheets, 1971-2011](image)

Source: Author

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⁵ Beecher, E. 'Interview with the author,' 12 May 2011.  
⁶ Connor, L. 'Interview with the author,' 2 July 2010.
The SMH and the National Times resisted page-one advertising. The SMH succumbed in the 1990s after the National Times had ceased publishing. The National Times was unorthodox in that it did not place stories or advertising on its front page. Instead, it used the front page as a large blurb for inside stories. These finding are consistent with the economic context of the late 1980s, and the onset of economic depression in the early 1990s. When the Australian stock market crashed in 1987, the National Times closed shortly thereafter as a consequence of the effects of the market downturn on its proprietor Warwick Fairfax Junior (see Chapter Seven). During this time, evening newspapers also closed, as technology, cultural and economic issues affected them also (see Chapter Two). Figure 8.2 showed the changes to pages three and five between 1971 and 2011.

Figure 8.2: The Tabloidisation Drift: Pages Three and Five of Australian Broadsheets

![Diagram showing page 3 and 5 analytics 1971 vs 2011 (n=189 pages)](image)

Source: Author

Essentially, Figure 8.2 shows the number of stories\(^7\) on each page (as represented by the blue and red lines) trend downward because these pages carried fewer stories than in the past. Conversely, over the same period, pictures became larger, as seen by the upward green and purple trend lines.

\(^7\) Expressed as a relative percentage, whereby no. of stories = 10x/2 to fit the scale of the Figure. For example if the number of stories were 7, this would be represented as 35 per cent.
In terms of how content may have changed over time, an analysis of the mastheads' lead stories on page one found a pattern in story subject genres (see Figure 8.3). For example, out of a possible 25 different subject genres, four of the five mastheads in 1971 dedicated their lead stories to international issues (the exception was the National Times, which led with business stories). In the month of April, these international stories constituted 36 per cent of all lead story coverage on the front page. The stories ranged over several international topics including: US President Richard Nixon announcing the partial withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam; Australian social and business boycotts against South Africa because of its apartheid policy; USA and China relations; hostilities between India and Pakistan; the jailing and subsequent release of a US soldier for the My Lai massacre of civilians; Israel and Egypt relations; and the future for New Guinea.

A decade later in April 1981, international stories rarely featured as the lead story, rather federal politics dominated the broadsheets' front pages (41 per cent). The stories related to Andrew Peacock challenging Malcolm Fraser for the Liberal leadership; and the Federal Government's proposal to publically list the national airline TAA. There was also speculation that the Prime Minister would offer Prince Charles the role of Governor-General.

After another decade, the majority of front-page stories in 1991 were court reports about the royal commission, WA Inc (25 per cent). This story examined the use of large sums of taxpayers' money to prop up failed business investments of the late Laurie Connell and others. Connell died before the royal commission's findings. The Commission was one of the largest for its time, costing $30.5 million. The then Labor Premier Brian Burke and former Liberal premier Ray O'Connor were convicted and jailed for corruption offences arising out of the Commission.

Up until this point, the 1991 front-page lead stories generally followed the news of the day. The exception was the Sunday Age. It started to depart from the prevailing news story and started to run with its own news agenda, often about local issues. Its stories focused on Victorian government scandals and speculation about the imminent future of Premier Joan

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8 Sunday Australian, The Age, SMH and The Australian
Kirner. The *Sunday Age* won the most Walkley awards for investigative journalism in this decade compared to other weekly papers, and daily papers (with the exception of the *Courier Mail*, which equalled the Sunday Age's award-winning efforts).

By 2001, the *Sunday Age*'s editor had changed and it was not producing as many investigative pieces, and its front pages showed no clear pattern for its lead story. Instead, it had an eclectic mix of front pages, whereas the daily broadsheets during this time focused on fleet safety problems at the national airline Ansett, which was to prefigure the airline's demise (27 per cent of all front page lead stories were about Ansett). By 2011, the *Sunday Age* predominantly led with human interest stories, consistent with the tabloidisation theory of Franklin.9 Stories included: How much it costs to have a baby; and a feature about St Kilda's prostitutes. The Sunday paper's front-page stories had departed from the news cycle. This is not surprising because with breaking news freely available online, a weekly print publication needs to offer its readers something they have not already seen. Meanwhile, the daily broadsheets page one stories converged on federal politics (38 per cent). The 2011 federal political stories focused on a range of topics about parties, personalities and policies (see Table 8.1).

Table 8.1: Most Common Page One Story Subjects, 1971-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>1971 (n=87)</th>
<th>1981 (n=82)</th>
<th>1991 (n=84)</th>
<th>2001 (n=81)</th>
<th>2011 (n=81)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STORY GENRE</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Federal Politics</td>
<td>Royal commission</td>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>Federal Politics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author *Sunday Australian, The Age, SMH, Australian and National Times*

What does the dominant page one story genre reveal about broadsheets? It is what is missing, that is of interest here. Franklin observed four aspects of 'newszak'. One: newspapers seem less concerned to report news, especially foreign news, unless it relates to wars, famines, and natural disasters. This is consistent with the examination of front-page lead stories from

recent decades. After 1971, international stories no longer led the front page of daily broadsheets. Two, Franklin stated that news was being displaced by the views of the commentariat — well-paid columnists receive greater editorial priority than general reporters. Franklin argued the rationale for this was to get readers to react so as to generate comments online, which is an important source of 'clickbait' for advertisers (this is discussed in Chapter Six, but not examined explicitly here). However, the news stories in 2011 did contain more commentary and analysis compared to 1971 (see Chapter Seven). Franklin's third point was that newspapers were providing more reportage about celebrities. This trend was not evident on page one during this analysis. Franklin's final point spoke to changes to newspaper format. The research here did find that Australian broadsheets' page-one layouts had changed considerably with time. Compared to 1971, mastheads now have fewer stories, more self-promotion (byline pictures, larger blurbs in the banner), more advertising, and larger pictures on page one.

Therefore, the examination of the broadsheets' front pages found evidence of slow, but progressive 'tabloidisation'. This finding provides a context for considering the future of investigative journalism in broadsheets. Already, in earlier chapters it was found that tabloids produce fewer investigative stories than broadsheets in Australia. It also found that Australian broadsheets that converted to tabloids, such as the Courier Mail, Newcastle Herald and Adelaide Advertiser, significantly changed their content, and consequently their investigative journalism faded.

Up until 2011, broadsheets' trend toward tabloidisation had not resulted in a fall in the number of investigative stories. Nor had it caused significant changes to investigative stories' qualitative features. But it had narrowed the subjects that investigative pieces were written about, and there were fewer investigative series. This is important in terms of what it might mean for audience impact and perceptions about investigative journalism. As discussed in Chapter Six, newspapers today are adept at promoting their investigative stories within the paper, through tags such as 'exclusive', a page one presence, and with a picture byline. This intense promotion is within the context that fewer Australians are reading print newspapers, and that newspaper penetration of the population is the lowest it has been in the past 100
years. Also the modern news cycle is digital and it delivers many more stories at a faster pace over a shorter time than previously. Time and space have irrevocably relocated for print. This means that investigative stories can disappear from the public's attention quickly. This is not helped by the 'toxic' relationship between print competitors, News Limited and Fairfax Media, who rarely follow up each other's exclusive stories. Notwithstanding audience impact, editors have been largely successful at adapting their news content to protect or 'fence-off' investigative journalism from editorial and resource cuts, so that the quantity of investigative journalism has not diminished as circulation penetration and revenues have declined. There are perhaps two important exceptions: One is the amount of corporate investigative journalism by broadsheets in recent decades; the other is the diminution of investigative journalism when broadsheets convert to tabloid.

**Tabloidisation and the Future of Broadsheet Investigative Journalism**

These findings are important because of Fairfax's plans for two of its daily broadsheets. The evidence suggests that the end stage of 'tabloidisation', whereby the broadsheet becomes a tabloid in size, suggests it is less likely that the newspaper will maintain the quality and quantity of its investigative journalism. Fairfax Media announced in June 2012 it would be cutting 1900 jobs, and converting *The Age* and the *SMH* to tabloid size by March 2013. Fairfax also announced it would place some online stories behind a metered paywall by March 2013. The size changes to these two newspapers — which this thesis has demonstrated have contributed more investigative journalism than any other masthead in recent Australian history — will make it more challenging for editors who value investigative journalism to continue to cordon it from the vast operational changes set to occur at Fairfax in 2013.

News Limited also announced in June 2012, it would be cutting editorial jobs and increasing the sharing of its content within its media group. This might also have implications for its investigative journalism, particularly in its broadsheet, *The Australian*. Following these

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11 Masters, C. 'Interview with the author,' 15 February 2011.
12 A metered paywall allows readers to view a certain number of stories before blocking access until they pay a subscription fee, or pay-per-view.
announcements, there are three key reasons why producing 'quality' investigative journalism in tabloid form, and in the context of staff cuts to newsrooms, might be more difficult for the current broadsheets. These points are discussed in detail shortly, but in sum, they are:

1. Tabloids are often associated with 'downmarket' stories and do not usually prioritise space for lengthy investigative pieces.
2. With fewer editorial staff, resources will be limited, and there will be greater sharing of content across the media group, thereby narrowing the diverse base of stories, including investigative stories.
3. Investigative stories rarely increase circulation, but are considered a positive for developing a quality brand. Placing investigations behind a paywall may not drive the number of unique browsers online, which is an important measure for advertisers in the digital space.

The Relationship Between Tabloids and Downmarket Content

On the first of these points, Australia's general tabloids (as opposed to a financial tabloid that reports niche business and political news) tend to focus on 'downmarket' story genres such as crime, celebrity gossip and sport; rather than investigative journalism. Franklin explained:

Newspaper groups' strategies to sustain profitability in an increasingly competitive and corporatised market with declining circulations, has obliged them to minimise salary costs by cutting back on editorial and other staffs. This in turn has a crucial impact on the newsgathering and reporting processes. Intensified competition and the increasingly frenzied search for the elusive, if not 'vanishing' reader, has triggered a shift in journalists' editorial priorities prompting a move 'downmarket'.

Fairfax's CEO Greg Hywood did not explicitly state that the company would pursue a 'downmarket' approach when *The Age* and *SMH* change size, and he was deliberate in using the term 'compact' rather than tabloid. One can guess that this was because of the pejorative

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14 Ibid.
connotations associated with Britain's 'red top' tabloids, such as the now defunct News of the World. This unscrupulous tabloid closed in 2012 following the phone hacking scandal that saw journalists tapping into the voicemails of a murdered child, celebrities and others in search of 'news'. Long before this scandal, tabloids were dogged with a reputation for 'prurience and sensationalism'. According to McNair, new lows of journalistic sleaze from British tabloids in the 1970s and 1980s threatened traditional press freedoms in the UK and created a 'widespread perception' about tabloids which he called 'bonk' journalism and its cousin 'yuck' journalism — graphic coverage of sex, the bizarre, the pathetic and the tragic. But unlike some critical media scholars, McNair disagrees with contrasting examples of trashy journalism with 'worthy' journalism to draw conclusions about the state of the globalised media within a broader framework of cultural pessimism. Rather, over time McNair has come to view contemporary media as more chaotic, complex and offering paradoxical social realities of the age than just that of the control paradigm of a capitalist dystopian.

Therefore, the question of 'does newspaper size matter in determining its content?' is a difficult one to answer. Clearly, there is not scholarly agreement about the nature or social worth of tabloids or the role they play in shaping democracy. For example, Colin Sparks, like McNair, also prefers to avoid stark binary comparisons between tabloid and 'serious' newspapers and would rather examine print content on a continuum, arguing that very few papers occupy one area of the continuum all the time. However, when it comes to the 'limits of tabloid knowledge', he was unapologetically harsh, arguing that:

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17 Ibid., p. 179-181.
19 Ibid., p. 15.
There is no doubt that the success of the tabloid form demonstrates very clearly that it can address the individual as consumer, but there can be equally little doubt that it has little or nothing to contribute to the life of the citizen.\textsuperscript{21}

Sparks, like communications academic James Curran, concluded that the empirical evidence suggested the British press were moving slowly, but inexorably toward the tabloid form.\textsuperscript{22} This was also the finding here for Australian broadsheets. In the past five years globally an estimated 80 daily newspapers have converted from broadsheet to tabloid in a bid to boost circulation. But generally circulation gains have proved not to be sustainable beyond the short term.\textsuperscript{23}

For example, British \textit{Independent} editor-in-chief Simon Kelner transformed his poorly performing broadsheet into a tabloid in 2003. He was among the first to adopt the use of the word 'compact' to delineate it from the 'bonk journalism' connotations of earlier tabloid sleaze. Kelner's initial success led to a string of British broadsheets changing size to garner bigger audiences. It was also in response to reader feedback, particularly women, younger readers and commuters, who said they preferred a smaller paper.\textsuperscript{24} \textit{The Times}, \textit{The Guardian} and \textit{The Observer} followed Kelner's lead and became smaller-sized newspapers. The latter two chose an in-between size, known as the 'Berliner'. The early British experiences had media commentators debating whether converting to tabloid was synonymous with a loss of serious content.\textsuperscript{25} Moreover, the move to tabloid for each of these newspapers initially stemmed their circulation declines. In 2004, Kelner's opinion was that it was too early to tell if the move would be a long-term circulation success. He said: 'whether we've revolutionised the entire newspaper market we'll only know when the revolution is over.'\textsuperscript{26}

Indeed, Kelner was right: it was too early to tell. The broadsheet conversions to compacts did not stop long-term significant circulation falls in Britain. For example, in 2012, the

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 29.
\item\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p. 22.
\item\textsuperscript{23} Cole, P in Franklin, B. ed., \textit{Pulling Newspapers Apart: Analysing Print Journalism}, p. 191.
\item\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 184.
\item\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 188.
\item\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p. 191.
\end{itemize}
Independent's circulation fell to 83,000 — down from 265,000 in 2006. The newspaper then hit financial trouble and was sold for a fee of £1 in 2010, to Russian oligarch Alexander Lebedev. Over the same period, The Guardian's paid circulation fell by a sizeable 170,000 down to 209,000 in 2012; this was from a base of 389,000 in 2006. Similarly, The Times' circulation fell to 404,000 in 2012, down from 654,000 six years earlier in 2006. Likewise, The Sunday Observer was reduced to 253,000 paid readers in 2012, compared to 444,000 in 2007.

With these British examples in mind, it seemed odd that Fairfax would convert its broadsheets to tabloid in 2013. Hywood announced that the reason was to save $235m by 2015 by closing the Sydney and Melbourne printing presses needed for broadsheet production. The newspaper group was carrying high debt levels and this would help reduce it. But Hywood also warned that the tabloid conversion might be just a transitional step: 'We will preserve the metro media print product for just as long as it is profitable, providing our growing news digital business with time to mature,' he qualified. It cannot yet be known how much this format change will alter the style and content of The Age and the SMH. But, there is precedence, admittedly with News Limited newspapers, that investigative output is altered when the paper format changes. Further SMH editor-in-chief Sean Aylmer has told to the Newspaper Publishers' Association that he expects the content of the SMH to change when it becomes a compact. He also said: 'If there’s things we think are important but readers don’t then we need to take them out.'

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28 Plus £9.25m over the next 10 months.
32 Ibid.
The Age’s former editor-in-chief and editor Andrew Jaspan (2004-08) believed the Fairfax papers would change markedly when they become tabloid. Fairfax's daily metropolitan newspapers have become more centrally controlled from Sydney to contain costs, he stated.34 It would be Metro Media editorial director Garry Linnell, who will decide the style and content of the future compacts, rather than local editors, he contended:

Garry Linnell wants to do a fundamental shift of what The Age and SMH should stand for, he wants to move them away from essentially appealing to the 'quality end' of the market to a much more 'middle market' approach. The model he uses is the UK's Daily Mail. That's where he wants the papers to be. Up until now, the big debate at The Age and SMH, is why have the news websites been repackaged in a way that doesn't feel in tune with the newspapers? Now, it is going to be the other way around: the newspapers will need to be in tune with the websites.35

Jaspan argued that the compact Fairfax newspapers would resemble their websites, more so than the editorial principles of the conventional broadsheet layout. He predicted the soon-to-be tabloids would 'be markedly different' with a focus on crime, celebrity stories, and other subjects that were popular online. Jaspan stated that it was a 'high-risk strategy' designed for easier sharing of content across platforms in print and online, and to maximise online 'clickbait' and ultimately to attract new readers, and advertisers.

On the downside, the 'downmarket' strategy in search of a 'middle market' audience could drive away existing readers, classified in advertising terms as the AB demographic, because of their high disposable incomes. These readers might no longer find the stories that they look for in The Age and SMH, Jaspan warned.36 Following the 2013 announcement from Britain's Guardian newspaper that it will begin a digital Australian news service, these readers might, as some have speculated, prefer this upmarket news choice to the digital offerings of Fairfax.37

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34 Jaspan, A. 'Interview with the author,' 30 October 2012.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
For a contrary point of view, in his analysis of what happened to British broadsheets that converted to tabloid, Peter Cole argued that, ‘producing serious newspapers which were the same size as the popular tabloids opened them up to accusations of taking on a more tabloid agenda’. But, he cautioned, each paper had to be considered individually before this claim could be upheld.  

38 He said: “dumbing down” is about content and subject matter, not size'.  

39 He also argued that:

The embracing of popular culture, from rock’n roll and soaps to celebrity, was a reflection of society, not led by newspapers. It is easier to criticise newspapers for not keeping up with social change than for leading change.  

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When interviewed for this thesis, US academic Michael Parks, the former editor of the LA Times, argued a benefit of a broadsheet page was more space to tell stories, and that you need to tell investigations with space.  

41 In order to do that, newspapers required higher ratios of editorial compared to advertising, and they needed enough pages to display their stories. Broadsheets offered a natural advantage in providing these requirements. Philip Meyer also argued that ratios were critical to newspaper quality stating that 'a good newspaper has more news in it than a bad one'.  

42 and Jaspan, in a separate interview, made a similar observation:

What has happened now is that the ratios are absolutely critical. There are a couple of things that editors need to focus on that readers might not understand. One is pagination, how many pages do I have, and what is the ratio of editorial to advertising? We always do a percentage on each section. To be called a newspaper, I think you need to be above 50 per cent, otherwise it's not a newspaper … I don't think it is above that anymore, the ads are so intrusive.  

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However as already acknowledged in this research there is an Australian tabloid that has proven to be an exception to the rule. The AFR had produced more investigative journalism in the past two decades than it did previously. However, it is also a niche business publication

38 Cole, P. Pulling Newspapers Apart: Analysing Print Journalism, p. 188.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., p. 189.
41 Parks, M. 'Interview with the author,' 18 March 2010.
43 Ibid.
that does not necessarily compete for readers with general newspapers. This project's research showed that AFR investigations were narrowly targeted, mostly about federal politics or financial stories. Therefore, at the end of 2012, it is unknown whether Fairfax's The Age and SMH can as tabloids maintain its quantity and quality of investigative journalism. It is known that other Australian newspapers that have made this transition have not. It is also known, through the research unveiled here, that overall Australian tabloids have produced fewer investigative stories than broadsheets.

To take a moment to recap, this chapter has shown so far that Australian broadsheets' trajectory, like its British counterparts, is toward tabloidisation. This research has found that the quality and quantity of investigative journalism in Australian broadsheets largely defies the fears of critical media scholars who have argued it has diminished. There was no evidence of a diminution of investigative reporting despite broadsheets' progression toward tabloidisation, so far. However, this data analysis began in 1956 and ended in 2011. Since then, 1900 jobs have been cut from Fairfax, so there is a case for concern that its investigative journalism contribution to the Australian public sphere will be more difficult to maintain. Furthermore, two of its daily broadsheets will transition to tabloid in 2013. Australian broadsheets that have made this format change previously have stopped producing peer-reviewed award-winning investigative journalism.

**Relationship Between Sharing News Content and News Diversity**

The tabloidisation of broadsheets is only one threat to their capacity to produce the same quality and quantity of investigative journalism in the future. Another threat is downsizing, and not having sufficient available staff and resources for investigations. When presenting Fairfax's end of year financial results for 2011/12, Greg Hywood stated that changes to editorial structures to drive down costs would 'see increased sharing of content and more efficient use of third-party content'.

Given that Fairfax was merging its investigative teams under a national bureau in 2011, this might indicate future investigative stories would be

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45 Baker, M. 'Interview with the author,' 11 January 2012.
about broad-based issues relevant to both Melbourne and Sydney, to service both news and advertising markets.

Similarly, CEO of News Limited Kim Williams stated when he announced operational changes to News Limited mastheads that they would also involve job cuts and organisational restructuring: 'In editorial, we will adopt a 'one city, one newsroom' strategy ... This won't mean people move to a single physical location though, but each state will be in a single news network.' This move, Williams stated, was part of News Limited's 'drive to move to a seven-day newsroom'.

Jaspan argued that because of Australia's high concentration of media ownership, this centralising of stories by News Limited and Fairfax could adversely affect diversity of news in Australia: 'there is a saying: one kitchen, many restaurants'. He added:

> If you look at The Age now, more and more copy is coming out of Sydney and I think the idea of regional variation to suit markets will go, with a few exceptions like restaurant reviews and real estate ... largely speaking, it will be the same stuff everywhere. It might make sense from a managerial efficiency approach ... but it doesn't add richness to Australia, when already we have, I would argue, far too few voices.

However, Jaspan said investigative journalism units could also, almost paradoxically, be protected in this environment.

> My view on the investigative unit is that it is a kind of protected species, not because the managements actually care much about investigative journalism, and by the managements I mean those who hold the purse strings. They might come out with announcements saying, "we believe in investigative journalism," but I don't actually believe that's the case. It is seen now, as something they need to show ... as an example of some kind of resemblance of a commitment to quality journalism.

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47 Jaspan, A. 'Interview with the author,' 30 October 2012.
48 Ibid.
In an interview with Mark Baker in 2011, who was then overseeing Fairfax's national investigative unit across its mastheads in 2011 but has since changed roles, he identified specific story genres for future investigation: 'My intention is to grow our investigative work with a particular focus on national political coverage and national affairs coverage as well.'\(^{49}\)

What this means for print investigative journalism in terms of story and regional diversity is unclear, especially given that Baker is no longer overseeing Fairfax's investigative unit. But the creation of a national unit does signal that Fairfax investigative journalism will be targeted to specific subject genres to attract a national audience in a one-size-fits-all approach.

For investigative reporting to occur, mastheads require skilled journalists who have both the time to do the digging, and sufficient staff to resource it as well as other news functions, and increasingly across multitudinous media platforms. Alternatively, there would need to be sufficient funds to outsource 'breaking news' to a wire service. With the announcements of 800 collective editorial job losses across Fairfax, News Limited and Channel Ten during 2012, these resource allocations will be a difficult balancing act. Certainly, Hywood's statement that there will be 'greater sharing of editorial content across geographies and across platforms', does suggest a way to unbound resources. But, it also means that instead of getting separate stories from Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne on a subject with varying perspectives from different journalists, readers will get one viewpoint from a single journalist. This is desirable neither for geographical diversity nor for democratic pluralism.

Academic and investigative journalist Wendy Bacon told this author that editors make an important difference to a masthead's investigative journalism contribution, citing the Australian Financial Review's resurgence for investigative reporting in the 2000s.\(^{50}\) Her argument was supported by the results here, which found that the AFR substantially increased its award-winning investigative journalism in that decade when it had an editor committed to investigative reporting.\(^{51}\)

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\(^{49}\) Baker, M. 'Interview with the author,' 11 January 2012.

\(^{50}\) Bacon, W. 'Interview with the author,' 14 November 2012.

\(^{51}\) During this decade Editor-in-chief at the Australian Financial Review was Michael Gill, and the editor was Colleen Ryan, herself an investigative journalist, and later Glenn Burge.
However, Jaspan argued it was more difficult for contemporary editors to assert as much influence over content compared to their predecessors because they had lost autonomy over various aspects of the newspaper operations. He argued they could no longer be regarded as 'sovereign editors'.\textsuperscript{52} This view is also consistent with that of Rod Tiffen, who expressed concern that the role of editor-in-chief had merged with the role of publisher at most of Australia's major daily newspapers, causing editorial and business management concerns to coalesce.\textsuperscript{53} Ian Richards also identified this as a great problem for editorial independence because it undermined the charter of editorial independence: 'the manager, or publisher, or business executive, against which the charter is devised, now actually runs the paper.'\textsuperscript{54} Richards argued that it meant commercial performance outweighed the importance of editorial performance, which could blur the traditional division between advertising and editorial: 'These editors-in-chief essentially spend about 90% or 95% of their time on commercial issues, not on editorial issues.'\textsuperscript{55} Thus, the courage that Jaspan and Bacon argue for in an editor is made almost impossible in this contemporary business setting. US author and commentator Philip Meyer argued that newspapers needed to rethink their core journalistic values (see Chapter Three) if they want to stay in business as trusted sources of news.\textsuperscript{56}

Meyer maintained that print newspapers could remain viable with smaller audience share if they retained trust and influence, so as to have authority.\textsuperscript{57} This means editorial independence is critical. Meyer argued that giving readers evidence-based journalism, largely outside the domain of bloggers, would allow quality newspapers to maintain community trust — a necessity for them when demanding political accountability in their columns.\textsuperscript{58} Cole made a similar point. He argued that well-respected newspapers did not require as high a circulation as red-top tabloids:

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid. p. 214.  
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., pp. 214, 232.
Quality newspapers all punch above their circulation weight, because they are part of the political landscape. They are where the issue debates take place. They are read by the intelligent AB audience, the political classes, those who make the decisions.⁵⁹

Concerning for Australian newspapers is market opinion that advertisers no longer regard print readers as their quality AB targets. According to one print stock analyst, 'not only are circulation and readership numbers down, but the value of each of the readers has also dropped in the eyes of the advertisers'.⁶⁰ Many companies now preferred other methods beyond newspapers for targeted advertising, such as loyalty programs and direct email marketing campaigns to personalise advertising messages, rather than newspaper display ads.⁶¹

If this is a widespread view within the advertising sector, it means that a critical mass readership is quintessential for newspapers' future advertising revenues. This then would strengthen the case for arguing that in contemporary times the transition to tabloid would change the tone and content of the Fairfax dailies, because the key objective would be to maximise online 'eyeballs' to satisfy advertisers. The conundrum for all news media companies is making money or as publishers say 'monetarising' online content. At present, no Australian publisher has made significant revenues to offset its cost base from digital advertising and subscriptions. Former Business Spectator owner Alan Kohler noted when interviewed for this project, that:

*Business Spectator really is the only website in Australia, one of the few, if not the only one in the world that relies entirely on original journalism, not links, that is not connected to a newspaper or a broadcaster. There are very few, if any, startup websites that originate their own journalism and attempt to make a profit on that alone.*⁶²

Kohler also added that Business Spectator was not 'hugely profitable' at the time of the interview. Since then he sold the online newsroom to the established media, to News Limited

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⁶¹ Ibid.
⁶² Kohler, A. 'Interview with the author,' 5 October 2010.
for almost $30 million dollars. Therefore, if Business Spectator found it difficult to make profit in the online news environment in Australia, then it is reasonable to argue that other new news companies would too. The next section will discuss the challenges for traditional and new media to fund their journalism, specifically investigative journalism, in the future.

'Monetarising' Online Journalism

Traditional News Media

In Chapter Seven, former Fairfax and News Limited editor Bruce Guthrie and ABC Managing Director Mark Scott both made the point that investigative stories rarely increased print circulations, but the stories were considered a positive for developing a respected brand name. Given that both News Limited and Fairfax Media have, to date, either already placed their mastheads' online content behind a digital paywall or announced that this will occur by March 2013, their common goal is to attract paid subscribers. It has been established in this thesis that investigative journalism is expensive, and individual stories do not often deliver new paid readers. But, as Meyer argued, investigative journalism can strengthen the quality of a masthead's brand and build trust with its readers. Paywalls might in fact be an adversarial model for producing future investigative journalism. If the current tone and content of newspapers' websites were judged, it would seem so. Currently most (there are some exceptions, see Chapter Six) newspaper stories are commissioned for the hardcopy paper, and then uploaded to the online site, rather than vice versa. But this will not be the case in the future judging by the words of Hywood, who stated that the print editions of Fairfax mastheads would last only as long as they were profitable.

For the moment, Australian newspapers are stuck in a purgatorial space between the physical and digital spheres. The June to September 2012 newspaper circulation figures showed why this is the case (see Table 8.2). Hardcopy print circulations are falling relatively rapidly, whilst online paid subscriptions are still too modest to accommodate the costs of operating a daily metropolitan newspaper business. Of course, Fairfax and News Limited derive revenue

64 Fairfax Media, 2012 Full Year Results Investor Briefing, 23 August 2012, p. 10.
from streams beyond their metropolitan print businesses. But these too, were not yet enough to overtake hardcopy newspaper advertising revenues as the main revenue source to fund journalism.

For example, the recent circulation figures showed hardcopy circulation for *The Age* fell 16.9 per cent to deliver weekday sales of 158,485 copies. The *SMH* circulation dropped 15.1 per cent to 161,169 weekday copies.\(^{65}\) For all Australian daily newspapers, hardcopy sales fell an average of 5.9 per cent, a worse result than the previous quarter. That previous quarter was described as the worst on record with an average 5.7 per cent slide.\(^{66}\) News Limited newspapers also experienced hardcopy falls. The Australian weekday edition was down 4.6% to 126,901 copies sold.\(^{67}\) The *AFR* Monday to Friday edition slid 6.5% to 68,425 copies sold. The *AFR* had altered the pricing of its paywall late 2011, and it had lost more than 30,000 hard copy readers since March 2008.\(^{68}\)

Across the globe, mastheads have experimented with ways to get readers to pay online, through paywalls and tablet and mobile applications (apps). Magazines, and more lately newspapers, have also experimented with Quick Response (QR) codes. Originally designed for scanning manufactured parts in the automotive industry in the 1990s, these black and white two-dimensional codes are desirable for advertisers because they have a good record for converting views into sales.\(^{69}\) The codes being black-and-white also print easily in newspapers. They work by allowing the reader to scan the code with an app on their mobile phone, and this then takes them immediately to the advertisers' website. Studies have shown the QR codes' instant accessibility to product details increased consumers' likelihood to purchase.\(^{70}\) Recently, print media have used variations of this technology for their own

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\(^{66}\) Ibid.

\(^{67}\) That figure is lower when it is considered that 23% of *The Australian*’s audited paid sales include giveaways in the accommodation, airline and education industries. That compares to 6.6% for the *SMH*, or 10% for the *Australian Financial Review*.

\(^{68}\) Carson, A. 'Black And White And Dead All Over? Fairfax's $2.7b Loss Suggests its Future is Far From Rosy,' *The Conversation*, 23 August 2012.


\(^{70}\) Ibid.
purposes to reward subscribers with more online features, not available in their hardcopy publications or to simply move print readers online. By scanning the code with a mobile phone, readers can watch additional multimedia presentations. This is potentially an easy-to-use way to support a digital paywall, and to offer print readers a different experience, for example they could read a sports' story and scan the code to see the winning moment in digital video.

But, so far digital masthead sales remain modest. In terms of the 2012 September quarter, the results showed improvements on the previous quarter but from a low base. Also, it is not yet mandatory to report digital sales to Australia's Audit Bureau of Circulations until July 1 2013; thus, some media figures are unavailable.

Nonetheless, on a voluntary basis News Limited revealed it had 31,241 paid subscribers to The Australian, but this result was not easy to interpret because it included readers who had either purchased a 'digital pass' or had opted to bundle a print subscription with a free 12-month digital subscription to the masthead. In fact, The Australian had five different digital and hardcopy options at varying prices. The Age also offered free digital subscription with its print subscription. It recorded 30,000 digital sales from its iPad app, and the SMH had 56,000 paid net digital subscribers for the same quarter. Neither The Age nor SMH had implemented paywalls on their websites at the time of writing, unlike The Australian and Herald Sun. Since March 2012 the Herald Sun has had a 12-month free trial of its digital content for paid hardcopy subscribers. This cursory examination of traditional news media's monetarising of digital content illustrates that Australian newspapers' digital sales systems vary, as do their pricing schemes, and all have modest sales so far. One way to describe the different approaches to the monetarisation of digital content is that some are 'hard' paywalls that allow no free access of content. Others offer a 'soft' paywall where some content can be viewed without charge. For example, Fairfax Media plans to follow the New York Times model and provide a metered paywall whereby readers can access a specific number of articles before being required to pay to see more. No researcher has compared and contrasted the current

In addition to mastheads' digital subscription revenues, their websites draw digital advertising revenue, but to date not enough to restore newspapers to their profit zenith of the 1980s. For example, the 2012/13 annual report of Fairfax stated that digital revenues accounted for 17 per cent of the company's total revenue — up 20 per cent on 2011 figures. But Hywood would not isolate digital revenues into their subcategories: digital display and classified advertising, and revenues from standalone digital assets such as the dating site RSVP, local government tending site Tenderlink, accommodation site Stayz and real estate and
employment sites *Domain* and *MyCareer*.

What these different revenue streams demonstrate is that advertising and journalism have been decoupled and no longer inexorably fit together. Non-news sites can attract advertising as easily, if not more so, than news media companies.

There are a few general points to make here. First, online advertising retails for a lower rate than the golden days of print advertising when media companies monopolised the advertising market and charged accordingly. Second, studies have shown that Internet users do not spend the majority of time online looking at news websites.

Non-news websites are successfully competing with news websites for advertisers, thus further driving down the advertising pricing rates. Third, falls in traditional media advertising revenues have led to falls in other measures of their performance, such as: share price, circulations and overall operating revenues (see Chapter Two). While it is clear traditional news companies have yet to identify how to get sufficient numbers of readers to pay for online content to restore revenues, what is less clear is the long-term consequence of this for investigative journalism.

The thesis results in Chapter Five identified from the online study of three news websites (without hardcopy support) that some Australian investigative journalism was originating online. But, the numbers of investigative stories were low compared to broadsheets, and the majority were collaborations. The low quantity reflected similar numbers of investigative stories produced by broadsheet mastheads in the 1970s when investigative journalism was coming in to vogue. In Chapter Five it was concluded that this reflected the nascent character of the online news medium as an original producer of investigative journalism in Australia. Similarly, the 1970s was also a relatively nascent period for broadsheet investigative journalism. That is to say, the online sphere needs time and it might be producing more investigative journalism in the future; but it is not yet.

To better understand the findings of the online study — of relatively low levels of investigative journalism being produced in this sphere — a 2012 forum of producers of some

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of Australia's newest online news sites (see Appendix D) revealed the frustrations and challenges for online news startups, including: the difficulty of producing investigative journalism. Broadly defined, these challenges belonged to one of three categories: concept, getting it right to create news content that people want to engage with online; technical issues, including technical tools to attract and retain audience; and identifying a sustainable revenue base. These broad areas are discussed next in the context of challenges and opportunities for new news sites to originate Australian investigative journalism in the online sphere.

**New News Media**

Appendix D shows an overview of news media startup entities represented at the Centre for Advanced Journalism University of Melbourne Seminar on 20 October 2012. While not a definitive list of startup news sites, some of their experiences are included here because this forum provided a snapshot of common, shared challenges for new news media in Australia.

Importantly, in terms of this research, of the nine represented startups four would consider doing investigative journalism at some point in the future, but only if their funding improved (see Appendix D). Many of the speakers argued that initiating a startup news website was more difficult than expected. For example, OurSay founder, Eyal Halamish, described the task as akin to 'building the ship as you are sailing it'.

Of interest here, is that investigative journalism was not identified as a key priority at the time of the concept phase by any of the founders for their news sites. Luke Stegemann of The Melbourne Review, which is a longer form news website and hardcopy magazine, hoped that he could 'consider doing investigative journalism down the track', but it was too expensive presently.

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76 Ibid.
Even online, startups experienced economic barriers to entry despite contrary views that it was the domain whereby anyone with an Internet connection could produce digital news content. Penny Modra, from *The Thousands City Guides*, found that: 'it has been expensive to build a website, much more expensive than producing four print editions of our newsletter. The website needs to last about five years, so we really need to get it right, and that costs big money.'

**Attracting Audience and Funding a News Website**

Online news startups also experienced difficulties attracting and retaining viewers. Building an audience involved search engine optimisation (SEO), to 'creating or modifying a website in a way that makes it easier for search engines to both crawl and index content'. It also involved site referrals through Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Tumblr and other social media, and using conventional media — through news stories and advertising.

Most of the startups struggled to find a sustainable funding model. Some avoided it and did it as a passion project, some relied on local government grants. The downside of grants was that they were usually one-off awards. Also, grant criteria could derail a project if the objectives of the two were not strongly aligned, as *Meld Magazine's* founder, Karen Poh, testified. Online advertising was difficult to attract because it required a 'critical mass' audience. Partnerships, strategic advertising, holding events, and selling products related to a website, were among startups' revenue sources.

Online advertising was viewed 'as a very labor intensive way of making money,' according to Modra. She argued a recent challenge for her was to manage the increasing expectations of advertisers: 'You are no longer selling ads, but selling your audience.' Without care, there could be an uncomfortable blurring of the boundaries between advertisements and site

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81 Ibid.
content. For Modra it became apparent that: 'we do need to know more about our readers in order to sustain our advertising income.'

*Renew Economy* editor, Giles Parkinson, a former print journalist, said his website relied on Google advertising and reselling some content for his revenue base. He stated that online advertising was dependent on high Internet traffic volumes, which meant story turnover was important to keep readers returning to the site: 'the problem for me is I would like to spend time doing some investigative journalism, but how do you pay for that and keep up the traffic? That is the frustration.'

Developing alternative revenue measures, such as using mobile apps to attract readers, was considered by some to be prohibitively expensive: 'iPhone apps are very expensive to develop,' Modra argued. Stegemann added that Apple exerted too much control over online businesses. Currently, 30 per cent of an app's revenue goes back to Apple, plus an annual administration fee of $100. Most startups also rejected micropayments. This decade-old concept is where website visitors are charged a few cents (or less) for visiting a webpage using a viewer's PayPal account or equivalent. In exchange for the micropayment the user expects a faster connection to the website — because online advertising can take time to download and slow the Internet speed — and aesthetic layout due to the absence of advertising. Key arguments against micropayments, included: users' concerns about inadvertent overcharging; that users already paid for Internet use through their Internet Service Provider (ISP), and that much of the World Wide Web content was freely available without charge.

Supporting the findings of this research, several startups were using collaborations and strategic partnerships to fund and provide site content. *Oursay* regularly collaborated with

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83 Ibid.
selected institutions and media organisations. The collaborative model is also the preferred model of the curated research website, *The Conversation*. This will be discussed shortly.

In sum, the main findings from the startup forum were that sustaining a viable online news site is problematic, and producing investigative journalism is difficult. Each concept had idiosyncratic challenges but common problems were retaining audience and finding a sustainable revenue model. Most of the startups found it too expensive to pay contributors, and several relied on free content; one did so in exchange for a mentoring program. Of importance to this chapter was that investigative journalism was not a priority for these new news sites. Less than half expressed a desire to produce it at all, and identified cost and time as prohibitive factors.

These insights complemented the empirical findings of the online content analysis in Chapter Five. In answer to the research question, is the Australian public sphere receiving, and benefitting from, new sources of investigative journalism, and if so, how do these compare to print broadsheet contributions? The research in this thesis has identified that while the independent online sphere is originating investigative journalism, it is in small volumes compared to newspapers and other established media. The online news sphere generated in Australia is not yet in a position to replicate the significant contributions of investigative journalism from traditional media, particularly newspapers if they were to fail tomorrow in 2013. This chapter also found that one of the more promising content and funding models for delivering investigative journalism, for both online and print, was cross-media and institutional collaborations.

### Institutional Collaborations and *The Conversation*

An institutional collaborative framework financially underpins *The Conversation*. The news website has three main sources of funding: government (federal and state, 20 per cent), corporates (20 per cent) and universities (60 per cent). *The Conversation* essentially uses

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89 Jaspan, A. 'Interview with the author,' 30 October 2012.
academic content and appoints staff journalists — one of few Australian online sites to employ a full-time editorial workforce without hardcopy support — to edit content suitable for a general audience.

*The Conversation* describes itself as:

> An independent source of analysis, commentary and news from the university and research sector. Our team of professional editors work with more than 3,600 registered academics and researchers from 240 institutions.\(^9\)

The website launched in February 2011, and by 2012 its peak audience was 800,000 unique viewers per month.\(^9\) Jaspan, its founder, explained that he chose to avoid an advertising funding model when conceptualising *The Conversation*: 'I thought, I don't want to be in the advertising game, because then you are at the mercy of advertisers, and they can exert influence over editorial, and if they cut back, you have to cut back as well.'\(^9\) Jaspan argued that the model had potential to grow as it had financial support from 20 of 39 Australian universities. His goal is to enlist all Australian universities, and some research institutions. *The Conversation* also has institutional support from a major law firm after Jaspan negotiated free 24-hour legal advice for its content.

Here, it can be seen that non-media institutions, in this case academic and legal, are playing a role in delivering 'public interest' journalism. Jaspan argued that the Australian tertiary sector attracted $12 billion a year in taxpayer funding and largely had bipartisan support because of its 'public good' role, and journalism also provided this role, especially through its watchdog function. While traditional media institutions had weakened, other institutions could potentially step in to support this watchdog role. Jaspan stated:

> Unfortunately as the business model has unravelled in newspapers it has meant they have had to downsize the quality of that 'public good' space. By that I mean to have reporters out there asking questions, rather than in the office on the phone. It's known as 'shoe leather' journalism and it has diminished ... the watchdog role in newspapers is reduced, which is the 'public

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\(^9\) Jaspan, A. 'Interview with the author,' 30 October 2012.  
\(^9\) Ibid.
good' role. My argument is that if we believe in that 'public good' role we should acknowledge
the media as no different to other 'public goods' such as theatres, parks, museums, swimming
pools, other stuff, that we as a community think are worth having.93

It was with the 'public good' role in mind, that Jaspan searched for a new funding model for
journalism. Government subsidies alone attracted criticism of State influence, even though
the ABC and BBC were examples that showed the contrary, Jaspan argued. In fact as
discussed in Chapter Three, Michael Schudson found that often state-sponsored media
exerted more independence in stories compared to commercial media.94 Important to The
Conversation was that, 'Every one of our contracts with government, universities, etc
includes an enshrinement of the principles of editorial independence,' Jaspan stated. The
Conversation model has shown it is capable of public interest journalism, and, according to
Jaspan, could be compatible with supporting investigative journalism in the future.95

Another Australian new news site producing some investigative journalism, but which was
not included in this thesis' online methodology because it, like The Conversation, arrived
after this study began, is The Global Mail launched in February 2012. As mentioned in
Chapter Six, this online-only news and features website employs journalists specifically to
pursue public interest journalism. It is funded entirely through the philanthropy of travel
website entrepreneur Graeme Wood. Wood pledged $15-20 million for three years. What
happens to the website after that period (or even before) is unclear. The site does not have
advertising or other funding at this stage. Bacon, speaking about the Global Mail, said: 'they
have a weird situation where they don't need to have advertising and they don't need to get
supporters, so what is going to happen with that in the future? At the moment they have done
some good stuff, and it is improving.'96 Since that interview, The Global Mail shed 20 per
cent of its editorial workforce in December 2012 including its dedicated investigative
reporter, and thus its future is uncertain. Also, Wood has since offered to help fund the digital

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93 Ibid.
95 Jaspan, A. 'Interview with the author,' 30 October 2012.
96 Bacon, W. 'Interview with the author,' 14 November 2012.
97 Knott, M. 'Guardian at the Gates: Oz Play Bad News for Fairfax,' Crikey, 16 January 2013 retrieved from
site for the Australian version of *The Guardian*, making no comment on the future of the *Global Mail.* This example shows that even with philanthropic funding online news startups are not easy to sustain, and of those that do endure, few also undertake investigative journalism.

**Funding Online News Websites (Used in the Methodology)**

The three websites included in this thesis' online study, used subscription, advertising or public donations or a combination of these to fund journalism. *Crikey*, Australia's longest running news website, has for more than a decade relied on a mixed funding model of subscriptions and advertising. Also, it has experimented with collaborations, working on stories with the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism, and other academic institutions. Wendy Bacon, based at the Centre, facilitated some of these collaborations. Bacon argued: 'We can't rely on the print business model surviving, we have to look at what sectors are relevant, this includes the university sector.' She predicted that the future of investigative journalism would become a mixture of models increasingly involving collaborations, involving content and funding contributions, from universities and other organisations. With downsizing of traditional media, many experienced journalists now worked at universities teaching undergraduate journalism, but also higher degrees such as coursework Masters and PhD research. Bacon argued this would lead to more journalism coming from academia: 'There are some pretty experienced journalists working in universities and they will continue to turn out [investigative] material.'

Bacon argued that alliances between universities and commercial media were possible and also desirable because of the large audiences they could attract. Bacon also foresaw a role for Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) working on investigative journalism with reporters, but would not advocate free labour:

I think there is great potential for NGOs and investigative journalism ... Take the subject of homelessness, NGOs could sponsor stories about it and have a media arrangement to ensure

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98 Bacon, W. 'Interview with the author,' 14 November 2012.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
independence, whereby what is discovered will be published. It could be better than what you get with the corporate media where things get tweaked.\textsuperscript{101}

Bacon cited both the collaborations between the corporate media (Fairfax) and ABC; and collaborations between journalists and academics at \textit{The Conversation}, as an example of how partnerships between different organisations are working, and could produce more investigative journalism in the future. But, she cautioned: 'to really do a big serious investigation, you have to have journalists to do it.'\textsuperscript{102} She also added that collaborators would have differing interests, so a mix would be needed to ensure investigative journalism is about a wide range of topics: 'NGOs will only be interested in certain things, for example they are not going to want to fund corporate investigations.'\textsuperscript{103}

Bacon also does her own investigative reporting, sometimes for online news site \textit{New Matilda}. It has been publishing online journalism on and off since 2004, and is one of the standalone news websites included in this thesis' online content analysis. \textit{New Matilda} relied on voluntary donations from the public and some display advertising. Its funding model has been tenuous, and it has closed, reopened and again on the brink of closing because of funding shortfalls. Chapter Six showed that \textit{New Matilda} is one of Australia's few websites that originates investigative journalism. In 2011, it launched a 'Save \textit{New Matilda}' campaign to more than double its 600 paid subscribers to 1500, in order to keep publishing.\textsuperscript{104} \textit{New Matilda} founder Marni Cordell said at the time:

\begin{quote}
Here in Australia it is much harder to get these kind of startups off the ground — \textit{New Matilda} is one of the only crowd-funded media outlets in the country, and we do a lot on a very small budget. Plus, I think the culture of investigative journalism just hasn't taken off here like it has [in the USA]... It's this kind of journalism that I think we need more of in Australia.\textsuperscript{105}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
WikiLeaks, like New Matilda, crowd sources funding, and it also has an uncertain publishing future. Since December 2010 major financial institutions blocked donations from the public to WikiLeaks for political reasons. This has affected its operations with WikiLeaks claiming it 'destroyed 95% of our revenue.' Further, its founder Julian Assange was physically incapacitated when he sought asylum with the Ecuadorian embassy in London in mid-2012 to avoid extradition from Britain to Sweden to face sexual misconduct charges. He feared Sweden would then extradite him to the USA where he could face the death penalty for his role in publishing leaked information against America's national interests.

However, WikiLeaks has also experienced great publishing success. It delivered investigative journalism through a model of cross-media collaborations. Most of these were formal collaborations with traditional mastheads, while others such as The Age were informal sharing arrangements with individual journalists. Nonetheless, until it collaborated with established newspapers in 2010, WikiLeaks found it difficult to get the reach and audience impact it desired with its revelations.

In Australia, WikiLeaks' decision to work with journalist Philip Dorling, who wrote for established print publications such as Fairfax's The Age and SMH, served to strengthen WikiLeaks' story impact and audience reach. Internationally, it collaborated formally with the New York Times, The Times, The Guardian, Der Spiegel and others. By collaborating with established print media, the whistleblower's audience and impact substantially increased. Like retailers, print journalists added context and verified facts, enabling the wholesale data to become investigative journalism. Likewise, the New York Times collaborated with philanthropically funded website ProPublica to produce Pulitzer-winning investigative journalism for a mass audience.

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Cross-media collaborations are significant because they show print newspapers' willingness to adapt to deliver journalism in the 'public interest'. They also provide new media with the institutional support of established media to broaden their audience and story impact and sometimes vice versa when online stories go 'viral'. In Australia, cross-media collaborations between established media have also delivered larger audiences and boosted story impact. For example, The Age's Nick McKenzie returned to his former employer the ABC to broadcast on 7.30 his earlier print story about corrupt custom officers at Sydney Airport.109

Broadening an investigative story's audience and impact is important, especially now that audiences have fragmented across plural public spheres. One of the themes emerging from the research here is that although there is more investigative journalism being produced from broadsheet newspapers than in the past, there is an enduring perception that is contrary to this finding. For example, Jaspan stated above that 'the watchdog role in newspapers is reduced' when in fact the findings here show that its quantum has not. McKnight, O'Donnell and Este also wrote that print's watchdog function had weakened:

Newspapers are the main vehicle for what is variously known as watchdog journalism, public interest journalism and investigative journalism. The permanent weakening of these functions, as the recent Independent Media Inquiry noted, may cause “damage to democracy and society's well-being” (Finkelstein 2012).110

To explain the disjuncture between the perception of a diminution in the watchdog function of newspapers and the findings here, it is useful to consider that stories might have less impact and smaller audiences than in the past, and could disappear before impacting significantly on public opinion and leading to some sort of social reform. This explanation is consistent with the findings in Chapter Six, whereby fewer print investigative reports belonged to a series of stories over time, compared to the past when almost all investigative stories were part of a series running for weeks, months or even years. Furthermore, the digital news cycle is much faster than the former print media cycle. In 2013 breaking news is

constantly updated, and these news items compete fiercely with earlier stories for the public's attention. Combine these factors with the deliberate lack of story follow-up from rival print news media in Australia, perhaps due to the pernicious relationship between the two duopolistic print establishments, and the likely outcome is that an investigative story struggles to reach a large enough audience, or it fails to sufficiently impact on its audience, unless it is repeated over time and space.

**Institutions' Relationship to Investigative Journalism**

It can be seen that, in Australia, many news startup websites have an insecure funding base, and therefore have no proclivity, or funding for investigative journalism. It has been argued and shown that collaborations and partnerships with more established institutions — media or non-media such as academia — overcome some of these challenges. Bacon argued that without new models such as collaborations, investigative journalism is likely to diminish: 'if the number of overall journalists is shrinking, and because at the moment we are not seeing many investigative stories commissioned for online ... we will have less investigative journalism, ultimately."

Many of the media professionals interviewed for this thesis identified media institutions as still very important for underpinning investigative journalism. They argued that media institutions offered legal, financial and moral support. For example, *The Australian's* Hedley Thomas argued that institutional support gave journalists greater editorial strength to pursue interviews with the powerful. He said it was more difficult for politicians or other authoritative figures to resist responding to media requests when the request was from an established media entity:

> The organisations that I would be seeking comment from, or investigating, would find it easier to give me the brush-off if I was not with *The Australian*. I think those spin doctors would probably privately conclude 'It might go away if we ignore it.' It is harder for them to ignore a Fairfax or a News Limited or 60 Minutes or ABC or a Channel 7. They need to engage. But I think smaller, online-only and independent outlets might struggle with that part of it. So all power to them for going after the story, and I am sure a lot of them are successful at it, but I do

111 Bacon, W. 'Interview with the author,' 14 November 2012.
think that it is a disadvantage over larger media organisations. Not a fatal disadvantage, but a
disadvantage for those reasons.112

When interviewed here, investigative journalist Chris Masters, who spent years defending his
investigative stories in the courts, said institutions could assist reporters with entrenched legal
battles, both financially and emotionally:

I am certainly of the view that as much as high hopes are directed towards a new era of citizen
journalism, I don't think it is delivering very much, and it is easy to explain why. I know from
my own experience, you really need institutional support to do significant journalism. It is the
product of a huge amount of work that requires considerable research, and beyond that it
requires legal protection. So, investigative journalism is necessarily expensive, and citizen
journalism may well uncover stories that the industry misses, but I know from my own
experience that it is very, very difficult to practise investigative journalism as an independent
operator. You just don't have the research base and you will starve. The reality is, we are paid
by the word, and journalism is temporal, it is all about how much time you have got to do
something.113

Similarly, Ross Coulthart, who has worked as an investigative journalist for various
commercial media outlets in print and television, also received legal writs resulting from his
investigative stories. He explained when interviewed for this research that, 'unfortunately the
defamation laws are prohibitive, and it is frightening to run a legal case, you know it's
probably about a quarter of a million to defend yourself for one week.'114 Asked if that made
it difficult for an investigator without institutional support to pursue potentially litigious
stories, he replied emphatically: 'Absolutely, you know absolutely, I wouldn't dream of doing
a story, publishing a story as a freelancer unless I was given an indemnity by the organisation
that publishes it.'115

112 Thomas, H. 'Interview with the author,' 18 July 2012.
113 Masters, C. 'Interview with the author,' 15 February 2011.
114 Coulthart, R. 'Interview with the author,' 28 December 2011.
115 Ibid.
However when interviewed media proprietor Eric Beecher argued that it was not so much the media institution that was important, but rather having access to funds and other supporting mechanisms, that really mattered:

Institutions used to matter when they were the only gatekeepers and the barriers to entry were so high. Now, it's just about money. You don't need an institution, you need the money. You need to have the right people who understand the laws and you need to employ lawyers. This is the great thing, you don't need the institutions any more ... I think you can make a case that the image of the media institutions are getting so frayed now, that they are no help anyway.\textsuperscript{116}

He argued new online news sites brought important news to the public, and could achieve as much as established media: 'Look at ProPublica, it got a Pulitzer ... then you look at WikiLeaks, it basically chooses the institution that it decides to hand its material to.'\textsuperscript{117} But, Beecher also said that he would not classify WikiLeaks as investigative journalism by itself. \textit{WikiLeaks} does not create journalism, he argued, but rather, was a distributor of information:

They are an electronic warehouse. They make it very, very easy for anyone who has information to deposit that information anonymously into their warehouse. Once it is in the warehouse, they have a distribution system and they take it off the shelf and decide what to do with it.

But, Beecher was speaking in 2011, and since then \textit{WikiLeaks}' future has become increasingly unclear. Also, as Robert Manne pointed out, \textit{WikiLeaks} was struggling for recognition of important stories until it did have established media support.\textsuperscript{118} The same might be said for ProPublica. It won two Pulitzer prizes for its investigative journalism when it formed partnerships with established media in print and radio. A former \textit{Global Mail} investigative journalist, Sharona Coutts, who was working at \textit{ProPublica} when it won its first Pulitzer prize for investigative journalism, said that the award demonstrated:

There was no longer any question about the value that partnerships could bring: for \textit{The New

\textsuperscript{116} Beecher, E. 'Interview with the author,' 12 May 2011.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
York Times Magazine, it meant winning a Pulitzer Prize on the back of enormous — and free — assistance from ProPublica. For ProPublica, the partnership had given us a much wider audience for our work, which was crucial for the success of what was then still a relatively new and small news outfit.119

Coutts and others who have worked in partnerships such as OurSay's Eyal Halamish acknowledge partnerships could be difficult. Partners might have competing goals, and like any team, they sometimes fell apart. This happened with WikiLeaks and its former print partner The Guardian. Assange threatened its editor Alan Rusbridger with legal action over an alleged breach of contract. The Guardian later published editorials strongly critical of Assange and Ecuador.120 Coutts argued that:

By nature, many journalists want to be first on a story, and it can take some adjustment to the idea of working in concert with another, or even many other reporters ... on balance, I'm an ardent supporter of partnerships. They present one way in which news organisations can continue to produce quality journalism while we grapple with the continuing collapse of the business model that supported the industry for most of the last century.121

While Beecher makes an interesting point about institutions, the arguments that investigative journalism requires institutional support are, on balance, more persuasive because where there is money there is usually access to much-needed resources (financial, legal, staff) and here 'institutional support' refers in part to that type of assistance. Of course, moral authority, which institutions can also provide, is important too.

As Coutts and others argued, the drawback of collaborations when they fall apart does not outweigh the benefits partnerships can bring, particularly in delivering research and time intensive investigative journalism to as wide an audience as possible. Thus, in answer to the final research question: do media institutions matter when it comes to producing investigative

journalism? The answer, while acknowledged these institutions have weakened is still yes. But also importantly, it is not just media institutions that can support investigative journalism, other institutions, such as academia, can as well.

Conclusion

This final results chapter has examined the emerging trends, and the future for broadsheet investigative journalism. Specifically, it considered whether the public sphere is receiving, and benefitting from new sources of investigative journalism in Australia, and if so, how do these compare to print broadsheet contributions? The evidence outlined in chapter Five and also here showed that, yes, the public sphere was benefitting from new sources of investigative journalism, beyond traditional media, but at this point the contribution amounted to significantly fewer stories than broadsheets' contributions. This might not always be the case. The trajectory for Australian print has been shown to be one of gradual tabloidisation of content, as Sparks also argued in reference to the British print media. Before the 2012 Australian job cut announcements, broadsheets' newsrooms had adapted to continue to provide investigative journalism as detailed in the preceding results chapters. A positive development for investigative journalism was the emerging trend of collaborations between broadsheets with alternative media, such as WikiLeaks, ProPublica and the ABC.

It is unclear if broadsheets, the preponderant providers of Australian investigative journalism, will be able to continue to adapt newsroom resources to provide the same quality and quantity of investigative journalism in the future that they supply now. The data gathered here about print investigative reporting ended in 2011. Until this point, the results showed the fear of media critiques about the state of investigative journalism in broadsheets was unfounded. But, since then, there have been further operational changes to print media. The effects of these changes to investigative journalism will not be known until after the two major daily Fairfax mastheads become tabloids in 2013, and have had sufficient time for their newsrooms to adjust to producing stories with fewer employed full-time journalists, and with their content behind a metered paywall. News Limited's mastheads will also be adjusting to providing news with fewer editorial staff, and using paywalls.
Up until this point, there has been a disjuncture between some pessimistic perceptions about print investigative journalism and broadsheets' actual investigative content as researched here. The lack of audience reach and story impact, might explain this disconnection between evidence and concern. In support of this argument, is the few examples where newspapers were able to extend their audience reach through cross-media collaborations. Collaborations enable investigative reporting to achieve greater public impact.122 Such collaborations have also benefitted sections of new news media. They are finding practical ways to pursue investigative journalism through cross-media collaborations (WikiLeaks), as well as local grants (Meld Magazine), philanthropic support (Global Mail), and collaborations with non-media institutions, such as academia (New Matilda, Crikey).

The second research question interrogated the role of media institutions in providing investigative journalism. This chapter found they are still influential and important for legal, moral and financial support of investigating journalists. The Conversation is yet to produce investigative journalism, yet its editorial team has realised the benefits of non-media institutional collaborations. In its case, it has provided 'public interest' stories through partnerships with universities and research institutions. It is conceivable that in the future, public organs that have credibility and authority could lend financial, legal and moral support to those who pursue investigative journalism, such as NGOs, and academia. Importantly, this chapter finds that rather than viewing the digital sphere in opposition to print media, collaborations that use the strength of both can provide investigative journalism that can deliver greater transparency and accountability of Australia's democratic institutions.

122 Baker, M. 'Interview with the author,' 11 January 2012; Epstein, R. 'Interview with the author,' 21 March 2011; Baker, R. 'Interview with the author,' 21 March 2011.
CHAPTER NINE

Discussion and Conclusions

Introduction

This thesis has recognised that investigative journalism is important because it provides the public with information that heightens transparency of public institutions and processes. In turn, greater transparency promotes democracy by empowering the citizenry to hold those in public office and public institutions to account for their actions and decisions. This accountability role played by journalists in a democracy is the basis of the notion of their role as the Fourth Estate. But, as discussed in the opening chapters, there were reservations about whether Australian broadsheet newspapers could still undertake such a watchdog role as they had in the past as print circulations and revenues declined, thus limiting resources for costly and time-consuming investigations. The research undertaken here, examining the investigative content of broadsheets over seven decades, had the purpose of resolving this question. The thesis' methods, independent of one another, have found that broadsheets have contributed a significant quantum of investigative journalism with important societal outcomes to the public sphere in Australia. The empirical evidence shows that, despite the tension between falling revenues to support investigative journalism, the quantity of investigative journalism from broadsheets has increased since 1956, even growing with each decade upon the previous one.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the key thesis findings in the context of the theories and literature explored in the earlier chapters, and to discuss the role of broadsheet newspapers and their investigative journalism in a liberal democratic society. It will consider how the results of this thesis fit with the existing literature about the relationships between newspapers, investigative journalism, the public sphere and liberal democracy, and identify how these findings bring a fresh perspective to that literature.
To achieve this, the discussion will take place under three broad sections. The first interrogates from where Australian investigative journalism has come. This discussion examines the thesis results in terms of theory — Habermas' critical theory of the public sphere; theories of political economy; and democracy theories that apply to liberal and deliberative democracy.

The second section addresses who, or what, is likely to provide investigative journalism in the future? This section uses the thesis results to examine the emerging trends for investigative journalism of in-house and cross-media collaborations. From the results, it can be shown that institutions matter in the provision of Australian investigative journalism, particularly media institutions, but increasingly, the evidence suggests non-media institutions matter too.

Before moving on to a final assessment of the thesis' research questions and conclusions, this chapter will, under a third section, make observations arising from the research experience and results, for future researchers. Also, it will identity limitations of the research herein.

**Who Provides Australian Investigative Journalism?**

In the words of Michael Schudson, the critical theorist Jürgen Habermas provided a normative understanding for defining the public sphere as the 'normative model of exemplary civic life'. Habermas' analysis examined the structural transformation of the public sphere, and he was especially critical of the commercial imperatives of news organisations, which he argued had adversely impacted on their intermediary function between state and society.

Prior to the transformation of the public sphere, Habermas had described the function of the newspaper as 'the public sphere's preeminent institution'. In the final pages of his 1962 thesis, Habermas decried the functionality of the public sphere because of a 'refeudalisation' of society. This entailed the blurring of public and private realms. It saw private organisations

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Habermas, J. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 171. 

Ibid., p. 174.

Calhoun, C. *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, p. 37.

With each decade since the 1950s the number of investigative stories from broadsheets increased. At the same time, the stories' qualitative features did not significantly decrease. This thesis found the 1980s was not a 'golden era' for providing more investigative journalism (as judged in 2012), but it did provide investigative journalism with slightly more qualitative features than subsequent decades. The 1980s investigative stories, according to the operational definition used, were found to be slightly more likely than other researched decades to stand up for the powerless and to pursue suppressed truths over time. This era's stories belonged within a normative moral framework and as such these investigative stories were about people or public institutions that failed people. They coincided with the circulation peaks of the early 1980s for Australian broadsheets, this meaning that more readers were likely to be engaging with these stories, often part of a series, so that their impact was more deeply felt within the population. However, as Jennifer Kitchener and others have argued, 1980s journalism, with some exceptions, largely failed to scrutinise the corporate sector as it should have done.

Compared to the 1980s, investigative stories in 2011 were less often about defending victims and the powerless in society, or uncovering a long suppressed truth. However, as investigative journalism does, the stories still questioned the subversion of moral norms. The results collectively found — independent of each other using different methods — that although subtle, a pattern had emerged that showed that after 1981 each decade performed slightly worse than the one before in investigating stories that took the side of ordinary Australians. This pattern coincided with falling revenues and circulations of print newspapers. From Chapter Two, it was shown that Australian newspapers' paid circulation had its steepest falls of any decade between 1990 and 2000, and this downward trend was also consistent with the pattern showing fewer investigations supporting victims and uncovering long suppressed truths in Australian investigative journalism.

A reason for this is that these types of stories take time: to find victims and to develop a trusting relationship so that they feel confident to overcome their powerlessness and tell their story. It also takes time through research to collect evidence to support facts that might

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uncover hidden truths. Time, in the media cycle of 2012, has been compressed compared to 1981. The media cycle moves swiftly, updating regularly, and also forgetting stories quickly. Journalists interviewed for this thesis stated that follow-up investigative stories were not pursued if there was uncertainty about how long they could take. One investigator had 'dropped' a 'good' investigation after just two stories, 'because I didn't know for sure that I was going to get the story by the end of the month.' Another investigator argued: 'You have to spread yourself thin, you have to keep things coming in, the reality of the paper is that everyone has to produce.' Yet, interestingly, the year 2011 (using the Tiffen typology) saw more investigative stories than previously reveal 'new information' to the public sphere. This might at first glance seem contradictory, as these stories also take time. However, 'new' information is highly desirable in a time when news is being commodified. Such stories are unique, 'exclusive', and can be promoted on page one. In contrast, follow-up stories, also involve effort, but are in journalistic terms 'a second bite at the cherry' and more likely to be for a latter, less prominent page.

The thesis results found that after the 1980s, fewer newspaper investigations were likely to be part of a story series. There was also a slight resurgence in single-issue investigations. Consequently, investigative journalism in the 1980s might have attained the 'golden era' reputation because investigative journalism at that time had a greater public impact and larger readership for several reasons. These stories, through follow-up stories by the same masthead, stayed in the public sphere for longer. They were more often about victims and the defenceless, or about truths that the powerful wanted hidden, and perhaps more readily touched Australians' collective consciousness. Also, more Australians read print newspapers then than they do now and rival news media were more likely to follow-up investigative stories, but not always. When other media do not follow up 'public interest' stories their reach and impact is more likely to be limited. This is more so now than in the past because the media cycle moves to the next story so quickly. This happened in 2009 when The Age unearthed corruption within two of Australia's print note making companies. Until a formal collaboration with the ABC it took several years before the story had the impact to lead to criminal charges being laid. It took the combined reach and impact of print working with

10 Epstein, R. 'Interview with the author,' 21 March 2011.
11 Baker, R. 'Interview with the author,' 21 March 2011.
television to arouse sufficient public interest. The crowded, noisy, fast-moving media cycle of the twenty-first century can easily move past 'public interest' stories unless their reach and impact is extended by being both well-publicised, and followed up — both in-house and by other media. In both these tasks, cross-media collaborations are purposeful. Further, the 1980s was a glory time for television current affairs programs, and they were producing consequential investigative stories too. The reach and impact of television investigations added to the perception that the 1980s was the halcyon era for Australian investigative journalism.12

In fact, the 1980s was not Australia's standout decade for print investigative journalism. At times, print outlets did not pursue some 'public interest' stories in the 1980s as expected of them. Wendy Bacon argued that the National Times strove to investigate state and police corruption, but was often met with silence from other media: 'The [Sydney Morning] Herald just ignored what the National Times was doing ... a really grim period was the late 1980s at the Herald.'13 She reflected that while the SMH was a very conservative paper, internal editorial tensions at the National Times also made it difficult to pursue some investigative stories. Bacon stated: 'There were huge rows every week at NT, the 1980s was not wonderful, it was really angry.'14 Yet, the perception lingered that the 1980s was the peak of investigative journalism in Australia. Further, Bacon, like Kitchener, argued that not all information in the public interest was investigated and published in the 1980s, such as some corporate wrongdoings.

This research also contests that the 1980s was print investigative journalism's 'golden age'. If it were a 'golden age' for print at the time, subsequent decades have certainly surpassed the 1980s in terms of its quantum of print investigative reporting. This finding is at odds with some of the scholarly literature such as the views espoused by Julianne Schultz who argued that, compared to the 1980s, the 'quantum and quality of investigative journalism produced in

13 Bacon, W. 'Interview with the author,' 14 November 2012.
14 Ibid.
the 1990s… has diminished'.\textsuperscript{15} This thesis' methods found the 1990s produced more print investigative journalism than the 1980s, and its qualitative features were similar.

Further, as Chapters Six and Seven have also shown, public interest outcomes arising from subsequent print investigative journalism have at least paralleled that of the 1980s, particularly the amount of 'new information' investigated using the Tiffen typology for categorising investigative journalism.

This thesis, however, does agree with Schultz's assessment of the Fourth Estate role of the print media. Schultz found the Fourth Estate's meaning is contested, and over time it has had different meanings to suit different circumstances; but, in the contemporary era, it was best considered as an 'ideal'.\textsuperscript{16} In its ideal sense, it has become synonymous with press freedom and the news media's watchdog role as a check on political power and public authority. This thesis, like Schultz's findings about the 1980s, found that the print media, though its investigative journalism, had contributed to the accountability of powerful people and institutions in Australian society. Some examples were detailed in Chapter Seven, and included Phil Dickie's (Courier Mail, then a broadsheet) and Chris Masters' (ABC Four Corners) separate investigations into systemic corruption in Queensland in the 1980s, which led to the Fitzgerald Inquiry. This Inquiry resulted in public figure jailings and contributed to the fall of the Bjelke-Petersen Government. Another example was the collaboration between The Age and the ABC, which uncovered international bribes involving Reserve Bank subsidiaries in exchange for banknote manufacturing contracts. This revelation led to charges being laid against senior executives, and the enactment of Australia's overseas bribery laws for the first time. Court hearings were underway in late 2012. Without these contributions of investigative journalism to the public sphere we might not know of these public wrongdoings, as we should.

Expanding on the 'ideal' role of the news media, Brian McNair described it as the capacity of the media to provide key functions in a democracy. These include, informing and educating the public by monitoring political processes and faithfully reporting them; the media acting as

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\textsuperscript{16} Schultz, J. Reviving the Fourth Estate: Democracy, Accountability and the Media, p. 49.
a platform for forming and disseminating public opinion, and allowing for views of dissent, and allowing for an understanding of political and governmental institutions. The last function, of importance here, was the media's watchdog function to expose transgressions of the state and public institutions in the name of the public interest.\textsuperscript{17}

In practice, and as Schultz alluded to, not all journalism is ideal, including investigative journalism. Its less-than-ideal form, sometimes referred to as exposure journalism or 'muckraking', also had its place in Australian print journalism history. Alan Rusbridger suggested that the difference between exposure journalism and muckraking was the 'quality' of the target, and whether the information was in the public interest, and not merely interesting to the public.\textsuperscript{18} Working journalists today also acknowledge some investigative journalism is not in the public interest. \textit{The Australian's} investigative journalist Hedley Thomas stated: 'There will be investigative journalism that has outcomes that will probably not be in the public interest.'\textsuperscript{19} But, as one of the key methods of this thesis involved the peer-reviewed Walkley awards, the results largely reflect exemplar journalism, rather than its opposite.

However, other factors can impede the public interest such as the 'market imperatives' of the newspaper business. This thesis identified reporting patterns that counter the public interest. This was particularly concerning in relation to the absence of journalistic scrutiny of corporate power from broadsheets in the most recent decades. In addressing this finding it is necessary to return to Habermas for a moment. As noted, he proffered conditions for deliberative democracy to function in the contemporary public sphere, to 'ensure the formation of a plurality of considered public opinions'.\textsuperscript{20} The influence of public opinions in the public sphere is reflexive and, according to Habermas, spread both in the direction towards government that is busy gauging them, and back toward audiences from where they were originating.\textsuperscript{21} Habermas argued in 2006, as he had originally, that the 'colonisation' of

\textsuperscript{19} Thomas, H. 'Interview with the author,' 18 July 2012.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 417.
the public sphere by market imperatives had led 'to a peculiar paralysis of civil society', which interferes with deliberative democracy. He argued 'mediated messages' were skewed by media shareholders' desire for higher revenues and, under this pressure, the functional imperatives of the market economy intrude into journalists' 'media logic'. This can result in media organisations treating political issues as a form of entertainment. This is demonstrable through the rise in personality-centred reporting of politicians and 'issue voting', said Habermas, whereby 'issues of political discourse become assimilated into and absorbed by the modes and contents of entertainment. These observable phenomena of reporting are also problematic for investigative journalism because, according to Habermas, 'the dynamics [sic] of mass communication are driven by the power of the media to select, and shape the presentation of, messages and by the strategic use of political and social power to influence the agenda as well as the triggering and framing of public imperatives, and investigative journalism. This was particularly evident from the 1990s when newspapers faced economic recession and encountered competition from newer media. Broadsheet mastheads' circulations were falling, due in part to the dominance of other news media technologies such as television, and later the Internet; and also due to cultural and political factors as discussed in Chapter Two.

The research found many broadsheet editors adapted journalism to the soured economic conditions, and through these adaptations were able to offset its impact on investigative journalism. The results found: greater sharing of investigative journalism resources across the masthead group, observable from the 1990s; using existing resources, such as foreign bureaus for investigative stories in the 2000s; and focusing on specific subjects likely to deliver outcomes, such as popular crime investigations, from the 2000s until the present day. The

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22 Ibid., p. 422.
23 'Media Logic' refers to the frames that journalism relies on to mediate reality, see Dahlgren, P. Media and Political Engagement: Citizens, Communication and Democracy, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 52.
25 Ibid., p. 415.
thesis also found during the 2000s the beginning of cross-media collaborations to extend the audience reach and impact of investigative stories.

Habermas' theory that market imperatives can cause the prioritisation of entertainment values over news was supported here with the findings of: a significant increase in crime investigations, the absence of corporate investigations (which can put advertisers offside), and increasing tabloidisation of broadsheets. For example, crime stories tend to be popular, and attract a large following, essential for generating much-needed online advertising. Tabloidisation is the use of tabloid-styled stories in upmarket publications, characterised by crime, sex, gossip and celebrity stories. Here, tabloidisation was also demonstrated through changes to the layout and style of broadsheets. Over time broadsheets' front pages featured larger pictures, fewer news stories and more advertising. Mass appeal stories are desirable also because they can be simultaneously delivered across print and multiple digital platforms to many geographical locations using fewer editorial resources.

Andrew Jaspan, the former editor of The Age, predicted that Fairfax's newspapers would continue the path of tabloidisation identified here. He argued that when the SMH and The Age become tabloids in 2013 their news pages would reflect the content of their websites, which commonly feature more sensational stories than the hardcopy versions. This was more likely than the reverse whereby the websites would change to reflect the 'quality' print editions.26 The concern about progressive tabloidisation, and this is not a unanimous view in scholarly analysis, is that while the stories are entertaining and enjoyable for readers, they can impede the workings of democracy through self-serving populism, with an emphasis on the private, in preference to reporting public democratic processes, thus engendering a 'loss of a democratic potential'.27 Jean Baudrillard wrote of the silent minority, whereby democratic participation in liberal democracies had steadily declined, as the minority disengage from political discourse.28 Habermas, in his original thesis, coined the term 'psychological

26 Jaspan, A. 'Interview with the author,' 30 October 2012.
28 McNair, B. Journalism and Democracy: An Evaluation of the Political Public Sphere, London: Routledge, 2000, p. 11.
facilitation’ to describe the rise of entertainment values in news media in order to satisfy the mass consumption of culture, but with little 'knowledge acquirement'. Habermas' arguments are closely related to academic debates about the rise of tabloidisation and whether it undermines or facilitates democratic participation. At the conclusion of this research, a slow, inexorable path toward tabloidisation was identified in the studied broadsheets, but it had not, at that point, diminished the amount of investigative journalism in the public sphere from the broadsheets or perhaps more aptly, the 'broadloids'. This is a new finding. The political economy of the mass media can also be useful in explaining the trend toward tabloidisation, as newspapers change their formats to attract more readers and advertisers.

Noam Chomsky, Edward Herman, and in the Australian context, Kitchener, Brian Toohey and others, have also drawn upon political economic theories to explain mainstream media's scant attention to critiquing corporate power. Chomsky and Herman developed their propaganda model to explain the performance of the US media, and its inherent favourable bias towards capitalism. They argued Western media subliminally activate news filters to pander to powerful societal interests when deciding what has news value. Essential elements informing their propaganda model were: increasingly concentrated media ownership; advertising as a primary media income source, reliance on information provided by purveyors of propaganda such as public relations specialists and government lobbyists; and anticommunism. Significantly, the investigative journalism of broadsheets examined in this study was found to have largely failed to scrutinise corporate power in recent decades. In respect to Chomsky and Herman's model, their 'filters' are prevalent factors in the Australian print media environment, particularly reliance on advertising, which might help explain the findings of this investigative journalism shortfall.

Throughout this thesis, other expressions have been used that also refer to the outcomes of political economy theory of the mass media. These include Myer's use of the term 'profit

29 Habermas, J. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, p. 170.
controversy\textsuperscript{32} and McKnight and O'Donnell's reference to the 'sweet spot' to illuminate tension between editorial content and the quest for profitability of commercial media enterprises.\textsuperscript{33} This thesis also found that the diminution of scrutiny of the corporate sector through broadsheet investigative journalism coincided with the beginning of print circulation and revenue declines. Kitchener wrote of the period, but explicitly excluding the ABC's \textit{Four Corners} and the \textit{National Times}, that:

\begin{quote}
Accuracy, analysis and investigation were overshadowed by sensational and simplistic reporting which sometimes verged on the farcical. Nowhere was this more evident than in the reporting of entrepreneurial activity that flourished for much of the 1980s.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

Also, consistent with Chomsky's theory, print media ownership became more concentrated at this time with the closure of all of Australia's evening papers by 1993. Likewise, the \textit{National Times}, a tabloid turned broadsheet that had scrutinised the corporate sector through investigative journalism, closed its doors in the late 1980s. Of the broadsheets studied here, there was a conspicuous absence of corporate and financial investigative journalism during the late 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. The exception was Fairfax Media's financial tabloid the \textit{Australian Financial Review}. Not at first, but by the late 1990s, it started to defy the trend of the broadsheets, and increased its corporate investigations. Even so, these investigations tended to be about individual or single company transgressions rather than identifying systemic corruption in the sector.

There are a few explanations for the \textit{AFR}'s renewed interest in corporate investigative journalism. Jonathon Holmes of \textit{Media Watch}, much like Kitchener, argued that failing to report on major corporate collapses of the early 1990s and late 1980s embarrassed the financial press; after all this was their turf. Holmes argued that the \textit{AFR}, a specialist financial masthead, was making amends for these serious reporting omissions of the previous decade when the stock market collapsed taking many Australian companies with it.\textsuperscript{35} The \textit{AFR} at this

\textsuperscript{34} Kitchener, J. 'Business Journalism in the 1980s,' p. 229.
\textsuperscript{35} Holmes, J. 'Interview with the author,' 19 December 2011.
time was also less reliant on advertising than the broadsheets, because it was the only daily masthead in Australia that made a profit on its cover price.\footnote{Beecher, E. 'Interview with the author,' 12 May 2011.} This was important because, while not the case in 2013, it meant then, that it could afford to pursue negative stories about companies that spent heavily on advertising without fearing retribution to its financial position. Academic Wendy Bacon had another view. She argued that the political economy argument is relevant, but it has limitations for explaining the AFR's investigative resurgence of corporates. Bacon argued that individual editors make an enormous difference to the editorial direction of a masthead:

A huge amount depends on the editor and their editorial direction, that is where the political economy approach is a little limited. So much of a newspaper's content depends on the editor, and the editor is appointed by people who are interested in the business side of it. If you have an editor that gives some journalists room to move — you have to have time to investigate and you have to have people who believe in you — then journalists like Pam Williams and Neil Chenoweth (AFR) can produce good material. At the moment, you can see the paper has moved rapidly to the right.\footnote{Bacon, W. 'Interview with the author,' 14 November 2012.}

The role that editors can play in supporting investigative journalism was a factor attributed earlier in this thesis to explain the standout investigations of the Sunday Age in the 1990s, under the editorship of Bruce Guthrie (see Chapter Seven) who made investigative reporting an editorial priority for the weekly newspaper. Habermas, also identified the important role editors played in informing the public sphere, and lamented that newspapers had given in to publishers, forcing editors to 'do as they are told in the private interest of a profit-orientated enterprise.'\footnote{Habermas, J. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, p. 186.}

Arguments of political economy of the mass media are also consistent with the research findings about Australian broadsheet newspapers that converted to tabloids and then stopped producing award-winning investigative journalism. The three examples were News Limited's two mastheads, the Courier Mail and Adelaide Advertiser, and Fairfax Media's Newcastle Herald. James Curran and Jean Seaton reasoned that advertisers could become a de facto
licensing authority for newspapers, because without them, newspapers cease to be economically viable. By extension, the types of advertisers attracted to a tabloid generally seek a mass audience rather than a smaller, affluent readership that is the target of high-end brands. Clearly, the National Times was an exception to this generalisation during the 1970s and 1980s when it was published. Investigative journalism usually does not attract mass readership, but it is purposeful for building a masthead's 'quality' reputation. Tabloids generally produce fewer investigative stories because they seek a larger, general readership. Sport, crime, celebrity and human interest stories are desirable for boosting circulation and attracting advertisers. Political economy theories can explain why the former News Limited broadsheets stopped producing award-winning investigative journalism when they became tabloids; it was no longer a 'market imperative' for them. The Newcastle Herald's former editor Paul Ramadge said that the tabloid version of the newspaper served its audience: 'You can be serious in a regional newspaper, but you’re usually captive to also needing to deliver content in kind of small-beer ways to a community.' Switching from broadsheet to tabloid has also altered some papers' journalistic standing within the media. For example, Margaret Simons described the Courier Mail in 2007 as 'one of the contestants in a close run field for worst paper in Australia ... but it's more lazy populism than ideological fervour.'

Before moving on to the next section, it is important to consider another conceptual framework for understanding political order in the digital age, and that is monitory democracy. Political theorist John Keane described it as a post-Westminster form of democracy. Keane identified that 'power-monitoring and power-controlling devices have begun to extend sideways and downward through the whole political order'. He named public integrity commissions, judicial activism, courts, think tanks, blogs and so on, as vehicles for monitoring power, now and in the future. At the outset of this research it was

43 Ibid.
acknowledged that public accountability and government transparency were achieved beyond the work of investigative journalists. The digital age provides new tools and mechanisms for observing and reporting abuses of power. It is theoretically possible that by harnessing the tools of the Internet, deliberative and monitory democracy might, in time, obviate the need for newspaper investigative journalism, as we know it. However, for the digital sphere to mobilise monitory democracy sufficiently to provide a check on those people and institutions with power, a few points need to be considered.

The first is raised again by Habermas, who acknowledges that 'the Internet has certainly reactivated the grassroots of an egalitarian public of writers and readers'. However, he argued that while it can undermine the censorship of authoritarian regimes that try to control and repress public opinion, it has weaknesses in liberal regimes:

In the context of liberal regimes, the rise of millions of fragmented chat rooms across the world tend instead to lead to the fragmentation of large but politically focused mass audiences into a huge number of isolated issue publics. Within established national public spheres, the online debates of web users only promote political communication, when news groups crystallise around the focal points of the quality press.

In other words, established media play a necessary role in making sense of the vast 'issue publics' online in liberal societies, according to Habermas. Similarly, McNair also argued that paradoxically, the cacophony of the ceaseless views expressed through the Internet, could return power to traditional information gatekeepers because they are able to cut through the noise and become 'sense-makers' for Australian society. From this author's point of view, this in part explains the rise of print opinion and analysis, especially of individual journalists who produce commentary across multiple delivery platforms to huge audience followings, such as Annabel Crabb and Andrew Bolt, respectively from the left and right of established

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45 The Internet's egalitarian power was mobilised through social networking sites such as Twitter during the 2009 Iranian elections. The voices of many allowed greater international scrutiny of the corrupt conduct of those elections.
media in Australia. These established voices become 'sense makers' and 'gate-keepers' for deciding which issues get attention. The modern-day challenge, according to McNair, is to find some order amid the chaos to preserve the decentralizing and democratizing effects of 'issue publics', to borrow Habermas' term, in the digital sphere.48

Another point worth considering is that citizen journalism, social media, blogging and other digital tools belong to the era of 'communicative abundance'. With communicative abundance is the blurring of the public and private realms and the transformation of the concept of privacy. Keane argued that this is not a bad thing for monitory democracy, and he is right because 'every nook and cranny of power becomes the potential target of "publicity" ... monitory democracy threatens to expose the quiet discriminations and injustices that happen behind closed doors and in the world of everyday life'.49 There may come a time when traditional investigative journalism as it is explored here is not required because of other, effective ways to illuminate corruption in the public sphere. But, as Keane also pointed out, as yet communicative abundance is not evenly distributed and has produced 'disappointment, instability and self-contradictions'.50 One reason he cited was the power gap between the information poor and information rich. The poor, he argued, were deemed to be 'almost unneeded as communicators, or as consumers of media products'.51 This, he argued, 'contradicts the basic principle that all citizens are equally entitled to communicate their opinions, and periodically to give elected and unelected representatives a rough ride'.52

Investigative journalism does play a role in defending the powerless and those without a voice in society. Debates about the worth of citizen journalism and the blogosphere are important, but essentially at cross-purposes with this research, which specifically undertook to examine investigative journalism content from broadsheets now compared to the past, to understand if citizens have lost public interest information that was not being replaced in commensurate quantities online in the digital era. It found that established print media were still main providers of investigative journalism in Australia, and the sample of online sphere

48 Ibid., p. 207.
49 Keane, J. The Life and Death of Democracy, p. 740.
50 Ibid., p. 739.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid., p. 740.
was not able to contribute as much Australian investigative journalism compared to broadsheet media. A reason for this was the lack of a sustainable funding model to provide sufficient finance and resources, but another might also be the 'freeze effect' that makes smaller organisations and online media concerned about their vulnerability to potential legal action as identified by Tim Marjoribanks and Andrew Kenyon.53

This thesis' research found that of the online contributions that were investigative journalism, many were collaborations with established institutions. This also suggests that investigative journalism is made easier (and the fear of litigation lessened) when there is some form of institutional support from the established media, or from non-media, such as academia. Thus it would seem that at this point in time monitory democracy's future, in the words of Keane, 'has not yet been determined'.54

A final point to be made is that investigative journalism is not easy to do. It infrequently appears in the news pages of print media, and it can be costly — emotionally, financially and temporally. These are challenges also for the online news sphere in Australia to overcome, and they might in time, but have not yet. Further, the results in Chapter Eight showed that while the 'economic barriers to entry' of traditional media no longer exist, nor is the oft-argued view that becoming an online news publisher with a large audience is as simple or as inexpensive as merely owning a mobile phone and having an Internet connection. Indeed, this was the view of this author at the onset of this research. But, the research here has found that to have an influential and constant online news presence usually requires a website, and a website that will last four to five years is expensive to build. Providing constant content in order to achieve reasonable online traffic in order to attract advertising can also be expensive and take time. Paying contributors is another cost consideration. Thus, the arguments that online news provision is easy and inexpensive are oversimplified, as the startups in Chapter Nine testified. Further, the numbers of dedicated online news sites in Australia that independently employ full-time journalists and have influence were minimal in 2012.

54 Ibid., p. xxxiii.
To sum up so far, the methods of this thesis found that print media produces significant amounts of investigative journalism to the public sphere in Australia. It found broadsheets produced more investigative journalism than tabloids, and Fairfax Media produced more of it than News Limited. Even if the National Times is considered a tabloid newspaper this finding remains unchanged. The size of a newspaper can affect its content, as tabloids are less inclined to do public interest investigative journalism, but the AFR and the National Times are stand-out examples where it has not. Since the late 1980s the tension between profits and providing investigative journalism has become more evident, as newspaper ownership in Australia has become more concentrated, but broadsheet editors have adapted and provided more investigative journalism without significantly compromising its qualitative features. Online news sites are able to do investigative journalism, and are following the trend of broadsheets and entering into collaborations, including with non-media institutions. The future of monitory democracy is potentially bright, but it is not a replacement for print investigative journalism in Australia at this time. Online news sites that employ journalists do so in low numbers, and although some of the editors of these sites expressed a desire to produce investigative journalism, but it was not yet feasible for them due to advertising levels, staffing costs and time.

Who Will Provide Investigative Journalism in the Future?

At the end of 2012, there has been no single economic model to replace the fractured traditional media model, whereby advertising and subscriptions have subsidised journalism. The exception is government funding of largely non-commercial media such as the ABC (and SBS). But the ABC also faces challenges: maintaining its funding through federal budget allocations; using resources satisfactorily to achieve the objectives of its Charter, and managing tensions between its widening breadth of platform deliveries, without significantly compromising its depth of newsgathering. Notwithstanding these challenges, the non-commercial broadcaster, particularly the ABC's Four Corners program, has provided significant contributions of investigative journalism to the public sphere, but there are no guarantees as federal governments change that it will be sufficiently funded in the future to achieve its broad information and entertainment agenda. In the past, conservative politicians
accused it of serving a left-wing agenda and refused to increase its funding to implement new digital television channels.\textsuperscript{55}

Of the other future providers of investigative journalism, the results of this thesis show an interesting recent trend, where the public broadcaster has collaborated with Fairfax's broadsheets, \textit{The Age} and \textit{SMH}, to produce investigative reporting. Other non-traditional media partnerships are also producing investigative journalism. A significant recent development was print collaborations with alternative media such as \textit{WikiLeaks}. The use of \textit{WikiLeaks}' material was a starting point for several investigative stories in Fairfax publications. Until \textit{WikiLeaks} partnered with internationally respected mastheads in 2010 (\textit{New York Times}, \textit{The Guardian} and \textit{Der Spiegel}) the whistleblower's audience, and its stories' impact were limited.\textsuperscript{56} The results here showed that the leaked material on the whistleblowers' website did not meet the operational definition of investigative journalism. In the debate about whether \textit{WikiLeaks} is or is not investigative journalism, these findings support the views of Eric Beecher and Ross Coulthart who maintained, when interviewed for this thesis, that it was not.\textsuperscript{57} However, and importantly, when \textit{WikiLeaks} teamed up with Fairfax journalists, who added context and verified facts within the leaked diplomatic cables, the resulting stories were defined as investigative journalism. Through this process the wholesale data became investigative journalism once it found a retailer.

Internationally, cross-media collaborations have had significant success. The \textit{New York Times} collaborated with philanthropically funded website \textit{ProPublica} to produce Pulitzer-winning investigative journalism for a mass audience. \textit{ProPublica} has also collaborated with other established media in different forms, including the Chicago-based program, \textit{This American Life}, a weekly public radio show broadcast across more than 500 stations to 1.7 million listeners.\textsuperscript{58}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{55} ABC, 'Alston Unsympathetic to Shier's ABC Funding Appeal,' \textit{7.30 Report}, Sydney: ABC, 1 November 2000.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Beecher, E. 'Interview with the author,' 12 May 2011; Coulthart, R. 'Interview with the author,' 28 December 2011.
\item \textsuperscript{58} WBEZ, 'About Us,' WBEZ, retrieved from <http://www.thisamericallife.org/about>, accessed 5 December 2012.
\end{itemize}
This thesis has found that cross-media collaborations provide a new paradigm for media organisations to fund and produce investigative journalism in Australia. These collaborations are significant because they demonstrate one way in which print newspapers are adapting to continue to produce and deliver investigative journalism in the public interest. Cross-media collaborations have enabled print media institutions, weakened by falling hardcopy circulations and advertising revenues, to continue to pursue expensive investigative reporting.

But, there is also a negative with cross-media collaborations that must be considered. Joint media operations can limit media diversity for the public. If such partnerships were to become commonplace, there would need to be guidelines or a code of practice to ensure that the public broadcaster was not perceived to be compromised by the commercial interests of its media partner. Campaign Manager of Friends of the ABC, Glenys Stradijot, argued that, ‘for the ABC to share costs with a commercial outlet could result in compromises — from the selection of matters to be investigated, to program content, presentation and promotion.’

If collaborations were to continue, and become routine, there would need to be safeguards against negative funding outcomes for the ABC. Cross-collaborations should not be used as a reason for the government of the day to reduce the funding base of the public broadcaster. Stradjiot raised this point with members:

The experience of the seriously under-funded SBS points to what happens to the level of government funding for a public broadcaster when it demonstrates a willingness to resource its activities (if only to a minor extent) with income from commercial sources. If government took a similar pecuniary approach to the ABC sharing costs by increasingly operating on joint projects with commercial media, the result would be less funding available to the ABC to undertake investigative journalism.

Another point considered in Chapter Eight, is that partnerships can fall apart. They can end bitterly, as was the example with WikiLeaks and the Manchester Guardian newspaper. A way to guard against break-ups affecting overall investigative journalism output could be

59 Stradijot, G. 'Are Public-Commercial Media Pacts in the Public Interest?' Crikey, 1 June 2010.
60 Ibid.
engaging in many, assorted collaborations. In order to maintain diversity of news stories, sources and subject matter, newspapers should consider engaging with a range of partners. A formal agreement of the terms and conditions of the collaboration could provide further protections to independence and diversity of each partner.

Importantly, one of the great benefits of cross-media collaboration is that it can generate greater audience reach and story impact. This is an important, key difference between perceptions about investigative journalism in the 1980s, when it was revered, compared to 2012. *The Age*’s Mark Baker who approved the ABC/Age collaboration on the Reserve Bank subsidiary corruption story 'Dirty Money', identified that:

> The story was hard to get traction outside of Victoria and I felt that, and the outcome has vindicated it, that by doing this with the ABC we broadened its profile. After *Four Corners* the story got a new lease of life and got a better national profile and .... The story continues to evolve, so it was a good deal.61

Stradjiot acknowledged that collaborations on investigative journalism could play an important public interest role: 'It may even result in the exposure of a matter which there would otherwise be insufficient funds to investigate.'62 Another positive outcome of cross-media collaborations was that until the ABC worked with *The Age* there was almost no follow up on that story from other media, particularly rival print media. Several journalists have privately attributed this to the toxic competition between Fairfax Media and News Limited.63 Thus, collaborations can garner greater audience share and story impact on important public interest stories.

A final point on collaborations is that they provide an immediate solution to the 'crisis' of funding investigative journalism whilst media organisations grapple with achieving a sustainable funding model for journalism in the digital age. Despite falling print circulations and hardcopy advertising revenues, the established media have yet to locate a digital pay model that generates as much revenue as hardcopy print media. There has been

61 Baker, M. 'Interview with the author,' 11 January 2012.
63 Baker, R. 'Interview with the author' 21 March 2011; Masters, C. 'Interview with the author,' 15 February 2011.
experimentation with paywalls and mobile apps. Such trialing resulted in the *Australian Financial Review* eventually halving its digital subscription paywall prices because of insufficient traffic to its online stories.\(^{64}\) The *Herald Sun* was the first general news tabloid to lock its content behind a paywall, and is expected to end free access to print subscribers in March 2013. Its experimentation so far has seen it lose 20 per cent of its online traffic since March 2012, and it has been suggested that it will adjust its model soon.\(^{65}\)

An examination of international newspapers does not herald any simple digital economic solutions for journalism. News Limited deemed its tablet-only news enterprise, *The Daily*, a failure in late 2012, after just 18 months of publishing. In a press release, Rupert Murdoch stated: 'Unfortunately our experience was that we could not find a large enough audience quickly enough to convince us the business model was sustainable in the long-term.'\(^{66}\) Yet, it failed despite the popularity of the tablet technology. In the United States, 70 million users own tablets, up from 13 million in 2010.\(^{67}\) *The Daily* failed because it was unable to easily share content as it was locked behind an Apple app making sharing difficult. Sharing information is what the digital media age is about, but this model was contrary to that. Further, as Will Oremus at *Slate* argued, news media companies are successful when they distribute their information across several digital platforms, rather than restrict content to one: 'narrowing your focus to a single device limits your audience far more sharply than it limits your expenses'.\(^{68}\)

Even the *New York Times* — celebrated, as a success story for its global reach — has not managed to make its news business profitable. While it has 532,000 subscribers to its online paywall, a 13% increase since its one-year anniversary in March 2011, it recorded an operating loss of $143.6 million in the second quarter of 2012 compared with an operating

\(^{64}\) Carson, A. 'Black and White and Dead All Over? Fairfax's $2.7b Loss Suggests its Future is Far From Rosy,' *The Conversation*, 23 August 2012.


\(^{67}\) Ibid.

\(^{68}\) Ibid.
profit of $31.5 million in the same period of 2011. The same is true for the Manchester Guardian, the third most read news website worldwide, yet it recorded an operating loss on its newspaper businesses in 2012 of £54 million. This shows that good journalism is not synonymous with good business.

In Australia, The Australian newspaper has the greatest number of newspaper digital subscribers, with about 31,000 users, but it reportedly loses $25 million a year operating its print edition. In comparison, the 12-year-old online news provider Crikey has about 14,500 paying weekday subscribers. Crikey makes money because it has tens of thousands more free users, who, although not paying subscriptions, are attractive to advertisers. This in turn, provides revenue to enable Crikey to be one of the few online-only Australian news sites that employ full-time journalists. But, generally, the news site rarely produces investigative journalism.

The thesis results suggest that digital and established news media need to work together, and not in opposition, to attract larger audiences and advertisers to underwrite their journalism. But more than a viable business model is required for providing investigative journalism. It also requires moral authority so that the public interest stories have impact to influence the public agenda, and ultimately engender social reforms. Institutions, both media and non-media, such as academia, have the moral authority to fulfill this agenda-setting role to allow for public impact. Without a large audience or institutional support to drive and defend a story, including legally, public interest information could be left unheard, without scrutiny. Richard Baker argued this was particularly concerning when a story uncovered information that others preferred to keep secret, such as the corrupt dealings of a public figure.

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As noted above, non-media institutions could facilitate providing the public sphere with investigative journalism in the future. There are early signs that the online research digest, *The Conversation*, which employs more than a dozen full-time journalists and relies on the content and financial contributions of more than 20 partner universities and research institutions, might establish a specialist investigative journalism unit in the future.

Furthermore, in *Towards a Rational Society*, Jürgen Habermas, argued that universities should be imbued with central tasks. Among these was that the ‘university needs to transmit, interpret, and develop the cultural tradition of the society [and] the university has also to form the political consciousness of its students’.73 In his earlier work, Habermas was critical of university academics behaving 'selfishly' and not sharing their expert knowledge with the wider public sphere, as they should.74 *The Conversation* is a unique Australian-designed online vehicle that allows Universities' expert knowledge to be shared with the public in a form that is readily understood by many. Its function can be seen as a 'public good' for society. Universities, like investigative journalists, are a valuable source of 'public interest' information, and thus greater collaboration between academics and media organisations such as *The Conversation* provide a new way of thinking about the role, function and delivery of investigative journalism into the public sphere.

There are other powerful institutions, discussed in Chapter Two that also might play a future role in providing public interest information to the public sphere, such as the monolithic online giants Facebook, Google, and others. These organisations are wealthy, powerful, and have enormous audience reach and impact. But, they also have a track record where they have shown themselves not to be the best corporate citizens or custodians of public interest information. They are multinational commercial enterprises. They do not represent a 'public good' role, nor do they pretend to. Unlike traditional commercial media, these transnationals do not operate under the self-regulatory codes of ethical conduct and practice. Certainly, it is true that traditional media do breach these codes, as the British Leveson Inquiry has shown,75

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but the argument here is that such codes were in place to be breached, and the problem was more one of enforcement. The new digital multinational companies can position themselves beyond the jurisdiction of a single nation-state, beyond enforcement.

For example, YouTube, owned by Google, refused initially to remove an anti-Muslim video from its site that had incited hatred and violence against thousands, and was associated with the death of an American ambassador, Christopher Stevens, and three others in Libya.\(^76\) In Australia, Facebook also refused for days to remove pages that incited hatred against the man charged with the rape and murder of ABC employee Jill Meagher in Melbourne in September 2012. Only after online public protests and repeated police requests, arguing that the pages would compromise the prosecution of the murder case, did Facebook eventually comply.\(^77\) These are examples of the imperfections of globalised monitory democracy, or what Keane described as its 'disappointment, instability and self-contradictions'.\(^78\) These important issues of media regulation and ownership are beyond the scope of this thesis, but are identifiable areas for future research. Before considering other recommendations for future research, firstly a brief summary of this section.

The thesis results found that broadsheet newspapers up until the decade ending in 2010 had contributed more investigative journalism than in past decades and the number of stories had increased with each successive decade, despite the fractured economic model and the absence of a sustainable digital model for the future. The strength of recent broadsheet investigative journalism was in part due to cross-media collaborations and greater syndication of investigative stories. The rise in cross-media collaborations provides an optimistic outlook for investigative journalism because it is evidence of a symbiotic rather than adversarial relationship between traditional media and digital media. It also combines the strengths of institutional support of traditional media with the capabilities of digital media to reach audiences quickly. But caution is also warranted in unconditionally embracing collaborations.

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\(^{78}\) Ibid., p. 739.
Without care, cross-media collaborations could limit the diversity and independence of participating partners in a country like Australia that already has concentrated ownership of its media.

Areas for Further Research

Content of Tabloids and Other Media

This research has examined the content of broadsheet newspapers and found that they contributed significant public interest investigative journalism to the Australian public sphere. In 2013, two of the studied broadsheets will become tabloids. A comparative analysis of the investigative journalism content of the SMH and The Age when they convert to a smaller-sized newspaper would be a useful contribution to the 'tabloidisation and democratic deficit' debate discussed earlier in the chapter, and also detailed in Chapters Eight and Three. A follow-up study could determine whether the size of the newspaper influences its investigative journalism content. Such a project could occur a year after the Fairfax newspapers have changed size, allowing them time to adapt to their new format, and could utilise the same methodologies herein, to enable direct comparisons with previous decades.

While this study did observe the award-winning investigative journalism contributions of broadcast media when they were in direct competition with print media, it did not extend to examining their content beyond the Walkley awards. One of the findings of this study was that there is a perception among media professionals that television has greater impact on the public with its investigative reporting than print.\(^79\) It was also found here that the impact of print stories might be lessened by several other factors including the sped-up media cycle, lack of follow-up on 'public interest' stories from other media, and fewer investigative story series than in the past. This study triangulated its findings but its newspaper analysis was limited to the specific broadsheets that were investigated, and more generally award-winning Walkley investigative journalism, which by its nature is a sample of exemplary peer-reviewed journalism. While the review of literature reveals some examination of the

\(^{79}\) Epstein, R. 'Interview with the author,' 21 March 2011; Holmes, J. 'Interview with the author,' 19 December 2011.
investigative journalism content of the ABC's *Four Corners* program, further research could specifically examine the questions of story impact and audience reach for investigative journalism. This could involve surveying the public for a comparative analysis of which media has the greatest reach. In an era of greater audience fragmentation, the most effective ways of reaching the consciousness of readers and viewers is an enduring question of interest. As is the question of whether audiences are changing the way they read to adapt to the fast-paced media cycle, such as skimming headlines rather than reading articles in full. Future research could examine how audiences filter (and discard) information in a faster media cycle, and whether newspaper formats have changed effectively to adapt to readers' filters, such as newspapers' use of story blurbs, captions, graphics and other tools to direct audiences to key pieces of information.

**Definition of Investigative Journalism and the Rise of Collaborations**

A significant challenge of this research project was finding an operational definition of investigative journalism. There is disagreement about whether investigative journalism is different to news reporting, and journalists, academics and editors had differing views about what constituted investigative journalism. Building on the literature and, using original interviews with Australian media professionals, a unique 10-point definition was created. It has proved to be both useful and robust for this study. The operational definition was also able to offer differentiation between investigative stories through a traffic light system that required six mandatory features before a story could be classified as 'amber' or 'green' investigative journalism. The discretionary fields of the definition provided for other qualitative features of stories to be measured that allowed for comparisons between them, their mastheads, and across time.

Future considerations are, who will contribute investigative journalism and how will it be produced in the future? For example, this study showed *WikiLeaks* was not investigative journalism according to the definition used here until it attained other investigative features provided by print journalists working in partnership with *WikiLeaks*. This raises interesting questions for understanding what is investigative journalism in the future, and again brings to the fore the question of monitory democracy's role in investigating power in society. Social
media and Internet crowd sourcing of stories have the capacity to allow contributions to existing investigations from many, and from non-media. Thus, what could start as a snippet of information on Twitter, could — after links and other pieces of data have been added — conceivably, perhaps with curation, become investigative journalism. Further examination of the online sphere, particularly social media, might suggest new ways of thinking about investigative journalism beyond the established media that were the subject of this thesis.

It was identified here that institutions matter in delivering investigative journalism into the public sphere because they have the moral, financial and legal resources to protect journalists from powerful interests that might seek to silence them or obfuscate the story through litigation or public relations' campaigns. Media institutions are still original producers of investigative journalism and they still have public authority and, importantly, can deliver story impact — even if diminished — compared to most Australian news disseminators in the fragmented digital sphere. Further inquiries could examine the emerging trend identified here of in-house and cross-media collaborations that are producing investigative reporting, and journalists partnering with non-media institutions, such as academia, to pursue investigative stories. A future project could examine the capacity of non-media institutions, such as NGOs, or even public libraries, to collaborate with journalists to provide 'public interest' investigative journalism.

**Content Analysis**

An innovation of this study was that it explored investigative journalism using several methods to triangulate findings, including using the quantitative tool of content analysis. This has resulted in large stores of data about investigative journalism in newspapers over many decades, but also more generally about the changing style and content of newspapers and news reporting. Specifically, it has also led to the first repository of 187 Walkley Award-winning investigative stories collected over the life of this three-year project, from many sources including microfiche, microfilm, books, correspondence with journalists, and special library archives. This information can now be used for other research projects.
Social History

The unique repository of Walkley-winning and broadsheet investigative stories gathered from different collections and resources, and used for story analysis here, has resulted in a comprehensive documentation of the history of investigative journalism in Australia from 1956 to 2011. This historic narrative is presented in Chapter Seven, and provides a unique account of how investigative journalism has evolved in Australia since the mid-twentieth century. The collection of Walkley award-winning journalism also provides a unique, rich volume of Australian writing over seven decades and was collected from vast research sources. Another historic newspaper resource was gathered from surveying more than 21,000 newspaper pages. It is in the form of an electronic database, includes information about advertisements, pictures, journalists, general news stories, and of course, investigative journalism, from 1971, and subsequent 10-year periods until 2011. All of these would be an important addition to social history research resources about Australian history, newspapers, investigative journalism, and journalism more generally.

Conclusions

After examining the historical and economic background of the print media in Australia, and viewing it through key theoretical parameters, a research gap in the available body of literature became apparent. The early chapters identified a dearth of scholarly literature about the relationship between Australian broadsheet investigative journalism and its contribution to the public sphere in an economic climate of falling revenues and circulations to support expensive journalism. The aim of this research, therefore, was to examine the role of broadsheet investigative journalism from its highly profitable past through to the current digital era of declining print advertising revenues to support it. To achieve this aim six key research questions were developed, informed by the literature and through analysis of the Australian print media. A methodology was structured using four research tools — three involving content analyses, and the other using semi-structured interviews with academics and media professionals — to find answers to the research questions. Subsequently, the questions were answered throughout the four results chapters, (chapters Four to Eight).
In summary, it was found to the surprise of this author that an inverse relationship existed between falling circulations and revenues of Australian broadsheet newspapers and the quantity of investigative journalism stories. The results showed that the qualitative features of investigative journalism had altered after the decade of the 1980s as circulations and revenues fell — with investigative stories possessing slightly fewer investigative features compared to reporting of the 1970s and 1980s. The research found that broadsheets contributed significantly to the pool of Australian investigative reporting, and the thesis was able to record many examples over seven decades where broadsheet investigative journalism had important societal consequences. These outcomes to name a few included: royal commissions, jailing of corrupt public figures, identifying miscarriages of justice, prosecution of doctors who had knowingly harmed patients, and raising awareness of social inequities such as disparities in the living conditions of indigenous Australians.

This thesis also found that the public sphere was receiving, and benefitting from, new sources of investigative journalism, such as online and collaborations between established and alternative media such as WikiLeaks. But, at the end of 2012, these contributions to investigative journalism were still not comparable to the greater quantity of stories produced by Australian print broadsheets. On the final research question, do media institutions matter when it comes to producing investigative journalism? This thesis found that they do. But more than that, it found other non-media institutions could also play a role in providing the public sphere with investigative journalism.

This study has identified a number of important and undocumented findings about the role of Australian broadsheet newspapers in providing investigative journalism to the public sphere, which in turn informs Australian democracy. Many of the more detailed findings are positive, and debunk myths that newspapers no longer produce investigative journalism, or that the 'golden era' for print investigative journalism was the 1980s, or that since then, it has been downhill for the 'quality' and quantum of Australian investigative journalism. This thesis has empirically shown that these assumptions might have been correct in the era in which they were made, but they no longer stand.
This research is also important because, for the first time, it quantifies broadsheet investigative journalism over seven decades, and also provides qualitative research using the original stories, and interviews with some of the journalists involved, to show why investigative journalism can matter. In the words of the late Justice Frank Costigan: 'the danger in secrecy is that it becomes an ingrained pattern of behaviour; material is kept secret which ought to see the light of public scrutiny'. This is the role of investigative journalism, to scrutinise information that is in the public interest, that others seek to hide, often for their own benefit.

However, falling circulations and revenues have revealed the invisible hand of the market. This research has shown that investigative journalism is influenced by market imperatives. This can be seen through the increasing features of tabloidisation on the style and layout of broadsheets progressively over the years, but also more pertinently here, on the subject content of investigative reporting in broadsheets. While editors have made adaptations to isolate investigative journalism from cost cutting, the impact of budget cuts has been felt through the selection of investigative story subjects. The consequences of the political economics of the mass media are, at best, a gentle reshaping of the public sphere fitting with the views of Brian McNair who described it as a cultural chaos; or, at worse the cause of a democratic deficit as espoused by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman. The thesis findings are situated closer to the optimists than the pessimists on this continuum.

Academic Bob Franklin wrote of the British press in 2008 that newsrooms were altering their reporting priorities: 'newspapers seem less concerned to report news, especially ... investigative stories'. In Australia, Franklin's words are yet to fit the major daily broadsheets, but they have proved true for three broadsheets that converted to tabloids, such as the Adelaide Advertiser, Newcastle Herald and Courier Mail. As tabloids, their Walkley-winning investigations faded. This is a cautionary tale for The Age and SMH, which convert to compacts in 2013. Size does not necessarily shape content, as the Financial Review has

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shown, but political economic models show how it can. A key indicator for the future of a masthead's investigative journalism is the power and editorial perspective of its editor. But, the story for newspaper investigative journalism does not end with political economy theories. There is willingness from new news providers in the online sphere to produce investigative journalism. The quantities are not yet comparable to hardcopy broadsheets, but there is innovation, particularly in the form of collaborations. This is a general, recent trend across established and new media. There is also greater cooperation between the digital and hardcopy news gatherers to provide investigative journalism. Under the political economy models, media institutions have certainly weakened. Yet, as the findings here show, broadsheets are still a mass media force in Australia. Despite cutbacks, newspapers remain the largest employer of journalists, and in an era of 'communicative abundance', print media provide an authoritative voice as the 'sense makers' and 'agenda setters' within the Australian public sphere. This is true of opinion, commentary and political reporting, but especially true of investigative journalism because, as found here, they do a substantial amount of it.

The rise of in-house and cross-media collaborations between media institutions is a finding that is new. These partnerships show broadsheets' willingness to adapt to the political economy of the media, whilst preserving investigative journalism through greater sharing of expensive resources. Non-media institutions can also fulfill the role of an institutional backer of investigative journalism. Examples in this thesis highlight the role of academia collaborating with new media sites such as with *New Matilda* and *Crikey* to deliver investigative journalism to the public sphere; and also to provide general and specific news through the online digest *The Conversation*. It is plausible that other non-media institutions such as NGOs or even the corporate sector, such as law firms, with an interest in 'public good' information could support investigative journalism in the future. Of course, there are hazards with this approach, such as further narrowing of story diversity and compromising media independence, but none that could not be overcome with care. Media independence of partners could be protected through formal agreements overseeing collaborations.

It is important to note that this research examined broadsheet content before hundreds of editorial jobs were axed across News Limited and Fairfax Media in mid-2012. Whether this moment defines a tipping point for print investigative journalism remains to be seen. What
happens to investigative reporting now largely depends on how broadsheets continue to adapt, and also on editorial courage. Importantly, rather than viewing the digital sphere in opposition to print media, collaborations allow both to deliver greater transparency and accountability of Australia's democratic institutions. Online media is fast and efficient at promoting stories, reaching new audiences and facilitating monitory democracy. Mastheads lend credibility and institutional backing in the form of moral, legal and financial support. If combined, investigative journalism's future is cause for optimism.

On a final note, the scholarly literature about the perceived decline of print investigative journalism in terms of its quantity, and its central qualitative features, were not substantiated in this thesis. However, if there is an overall decline, the research findings here show it to be more about the 'impact' and 'audience reach' of Australian print investigative journalism. In the 1980s, inspired by London's Sunday Times 'Insight' unit, and also after the US Watergate scandal in the 1970s, there was a focus and enthusiasm in Australian newsrooms for investigative journalism. Generally, then, print newspapers featured more prominently in Australians' daily lives, in the media landscape, the news cycle, and in society more broadly. Newspapers' audience penetration, circulations and revenues were also higher then. If there is a perception about the decline of investigative journalism, this thesis finds it would be better characterised as a decline in its prominence, not its quantity, and in its reception rather than its quality.
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APPENDIX A

Coding Rules for Content Analysis

This appendix has two sections. The first documents answers to some general questions about how investigative journalism was coded for content analysis. The second is a table that lists the 70 different fields of data that could be collected during the processes of content analyses, and the form in which that information was recorded in the digital database.

1. General Questions and Answers

What stories and newspaper pages were recorded?
All story details on pages one, three and five are included in the database irrespective of whether investigative journalism is detected on these pages or not. Every page of the newspaper is assessed to see if it carries stories that might pass for investigative journalism.

How investigative stories were assessed?
All stories that are likely to be investigative journalism on first assessment of the news pages are recorded and the operative definition is then applied to test the story for a 'pass' or 'fail'.

How were follow-up stories recorded?
If a follow-up story is part of an investigative series and it does not meet the operational definition, it is included as a pass, as long as the original story passed, but the series is only counted once as part of the unique contribution of investigative journalism to the public sphere. The rationale is that the investigative tests have been passed in previous stories and the current story could not have been published without this background work.
How were pictures recorded?
Every picture is counted on each recorded page. However, headshots are excluded. Graphics and cartoons are not included as pictures. Picture sizes are recorded according to the percentage of the news page that it occupies. The options are: 0%, <=15, <=25, <=40, <=50, <=75 or 100%

What does it mean when the story is 'touted as investigative'?
The story must use the word investigative, or carry an investigative tag, to be recorded in this data field.

How were the numbers of stories on the page recorded?
This tally does not include blurbs, the front-page 'odd spot' or weather. It does include story briefs that do not spill to another page.

How was 'intensity' recorded to identify page placement?
Five points are awarded to an investigative story that starts on page one. Four points are awarded to a story that starts on page three and also promoted on page one. Three points are awarded to a story that starts on page three but without a page one promotion. Two points are awarded to a story that begins on page five or appears on the left hand pages of two and four. And one point is given to stories on pages six and beyond.

How was 'media collaboration' recorded?
The collaborated story needs to show that the collaboration was deliberate, with the consent of the collaborating partners.

How was the 'use of other media agencies' recorded?
These are stories that acknowledge the use of material from a wire service or other agency, but it is not a formal collaboration whereby journalists or organisations work together.
What is an 'exclusive'?  
Must be exclusive to the newspaper or the newsgroup that published the story, in which case it only gets recorded once for the entire newsgroup to avoid skewing results. The journalist's regular employer is recorded as the publisher of the story.

What is a 'special report'?  
These are stories marked 'special report', or a series that uses 'tearaways' referring to earlier reports in a graphic in the story layout.

What is the investigative rating of a story that is part of a series?  
Each story, whether part of a series or not, is assessed on its merits, rather than as a collective.

How was 'investigation type' recorded?  
**Systemic** — These are investigations that have consequences and influence beyond the immediate story for other sectors of society.

**Single-issue** — These are investigations that feature a case study that is an isolated example. The story does not demonstrate a broader problem for society beyond the immediate effects of the cited example.

What does it mean to 'verify' facts in an investigative story?  
This is not always possible — especially with unsolved crimes. But there must be very serious, demonstrable attempts by the reporter to verify the information in the story. For example, these attempts might include primary interviews, independent review of the evidence, visiting a crime scene. There must be evidence in the story or series of serious attempts to verify information.

What is the 'public sphere' in terms of investigative reporting?  
This included stories that reveal 'something someone wants hidden'. It is more than a feature piece, but an uncovering of wrongdoing. The story needs to show a transgression of some
sort that is in the public interest that could involve a public institution or individual invested with public power.

**How is 'evidence of time and/or research' recorded?**
It must be apparent in the story that it took some time to research or pursue the 'facts'. This might involve travel, which is evidenced in the story. It will not be a story that can be researched, written and published in a day. The use of contacts is recorded, particularly if there is a suggestion the contacts might have taken some persuading to set up important interviews. The story uses facts or information that are not freely available, and may have involved time to get someone to open up and talk.

**How is 'space' of an investigative story recorded?**
All reportage is counted that is dedicated to 'the story' in that edition, and includes editorial, page spills and features associated with the investigative report.

**How was advertising recorded?**
*Classified little* – 6cm or less and 2 columns across
*Classified big* – bigger than above, that is not a banner or display advertisement.
*Banner* – Advertisement that appears left to right along the bottom of a page.
*Display* – A larger advertisement that is usually square, and not displayed in a classified list.

**What does 'online interactivity' mean?**
The story provides online options that might include video, picture gallery, an online voting poll, or other extra online media not available in the newspaper.

**How was 'sources named' recorded?**
This box was only checked when all sources in the story were named. Any unnamed sources meant the box was left unchecked.
2. The Data Fields Recorded in the Database

Shaded areas refer to information about investigative stories found on the newspaper page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Details Recorded</th>
<th>How It Was Recorded?</th>
<th>Additional Rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Active journalism?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>See Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Additional comments (about investigative journalism)</td>
<td>Text box used to write details about the subject of the investigative story</td>
<td>Non-compulsory, recorded only if known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are victims or villains identified in the investigative story?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>See Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Award title</td>
<td>Text box to record Walkley award title</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Award winner or not?</td>
<td>Text box to record if story won (not finalist)</td>
<td>Only 'winners' included in the analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Date of publication</td>
<td>Date format box used</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Date record created</td>
<td>Date format box used</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Day</td>
<td>Option box with days of week</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Detail societal outcome</td>
<td>Text box used to write details about the societal outcomes of the investigative story as they become known</td>
<td>Non-compulsory, recorded only if known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Does it pass the investigative test?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No' Must verify and not just report information</td>
<td>See Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Does it pass the provinciality test?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>See Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Does the story pursue a suppressed truth?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>See Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Dominant ad on the page?</td>
<td>Text box to record advertiser's name</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Evidence of time/research?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>See Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Exclusive and revelatory</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>See Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. If multimedia, How? Detail</td>
<td>Text box to record how the multimedia aspects were observed</td>
<td>Non-compulsory, recorded only if known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. If story is investigative, is this the first time it is recorded?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Intensity of the page placement</td>
<td>A five point system recorded using stars</td>
<td>See at end of table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Investigation type? Single-issue or</td>
<td>Choice box to check either 'single' or 'systemic'</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Investigative score (out of 10 - must get 6 to pass compulsory fields)</td>
<td>A 10-point system recorded using stars</td>
<td>See Appendix C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Investigative story details</td>
<td>Text box to record details</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Investigative story genre</td>
<td>A choice box with 25 options</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Investigative story title?</td>
<td>Text box to record headline of the story</td>
<td>Non-compulsory, only if known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Is a normative moral framework implied?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>See Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Known societal outcome?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>See Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Lead story genre?</td>
<td>A choice box with 25 options</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Media collaboration (not in-house)</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No' — only for cross-media collaborations</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Media partnership used?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No' — in-house only</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Medium</td>
<td>Text box for type of media analysed i.e. newspaper, website, etc.</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. More details of lead story genre</td>
<td>Text box for recording details</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Multimedia interactivity option?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. No. of ads on the page?</td>
<td>Numerical value</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. No. of pictures on the page?</td>
<td>Numerical value</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. No. of stories on the page?</td>
<td>Numerical value</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Notes about any follow-up investigative stories</td>
<td>Text box to record day, publication and details of the story</td>
<td>Non-compulsory, only if known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Other collaboration options, specify</td>
<td>Text box if option not available in the option box</td>
<td>Non-compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Page number analysed?</td>
<td>Numerical value</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Particularities relating to PhD worth mentioning?</td>
<td>Text box if a story has particular insights for research</td>
<td>Non-compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Passes compulsory fields?</td>
<td>Option box checked for Pass or Fail or previously recorded if a follow-up story</td>
<td>See Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Public sphere test</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No' to identify if any transgression of political or public figures or institutions* in public interest?</td>
<td>See Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. 'Quality' score for Walkley winners</td>
<td>Numerical score for investigative pass/fail test</td>
<td>Assisted with later analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Related to another record:</td>
<td>Text box to record the first story in the series that this story relates to.</td>
<td>Non-compulsory, only if known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Report type?</td>
<td>Choice box to record if news, feature, opinion, commentary reporting</td>
<td>Non-compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Reporter’s name</td>
<td>Text box to record reporter’s name</td>
<td>Non-compulsory, only if known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. Space dedicated to investigative story?</td>
<td>Option box</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Compulsory?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. Story details (Walkley winner)</td>
<td>Text box to explain what story was about</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. Tiffen typology</td>
<td>Option box of the different Tiffen categories for investigative reporting that passed</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. Type of collaboration</td>
<td>Option box to choose what type of outside collaboration</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. Uncovers a breach of public trust?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>See Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. Uses other media or agencies</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. Was a copy of the article kept?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. Was it a Murdoch publication?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>Assisted with later analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. Was it part of an investigative series?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. Was the advertisement publically funded?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. Was the publication broadsheet or tabloid?</td>
<td>Choice box to record format choices</td>
<td>Assisted with later analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. Was the second lead story marked exclusive?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. Was the investigative story branded as exclusive or special report?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. Was the news story marked exclusive?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. Was the investigative story syndicated?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No' or Unknown</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. Was the investigative story touted as investigative?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No' if 'investigative specifically mentioned</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. Were sources named in the investigative story?</td>
<td>Box checked for 'Yes' or 'No'</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. What award category?</td>
<td>Text box to record the name of the Walkley award</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. What month was the story published?</td>
<td>Choice box to select month</td>
<td>Assisted with later analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. What page number was the investigative story on?</td>
<td>Numerical value recorded</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66. What type of ad was it?</td>
<td>Choice box to indicate ad, Type such as classified, banner, display</td>
<td>See details below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67. Where was the story sourced (Walkley awards)</td>
<td>Text box to record where the story was located i.e. Newspaper hardcopy, microfilm,</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68. Whose byline?</td>
<td>Text box to record general description of reporter i.e. roundsperson</td>
<td>Non-compulsory, only if published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69. % of page dedicated to advertising?</td>
<td>Choice box expressed as a percentage</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70. % page pix?</td>
<td>Choice box expressed as a percentage</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX B

## Tools for Defining Investigative Journalism (Operative Definition)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Elements</th>
<th>Demonstrated Through:</th>
<th>Rules: Fulfills all of the Following</th>
<th>Pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Is the story revelatory or exclusive and sets the agenda?** | • It is an exclusive, or 'special report' of the publication  
• It does not need to be branded exclusive to be exclusive/revelatory  
• The article sets the agenda, delivering readers information outside the news cycle  
• The paper’s journalist, or a specifically commissioned freelancer to act exclusively for that masthead writes it  
• May include collaborations, as long as story is exclusive to the masthead, or its media stable | • Marked 'exclusive' or 'special report' (deservedly) or no other media carries same story (except if syndicated through news group)  
• Information is genuinely new and revelatory  
• Can be a news tip that comes from journalist's network capabilities or contacts | 1 |
| **2. Is it active journalism?** | • Unique sources are mentioned (don't have to be named)  
• Passive elements of reporting are excluded: i.e. press releases, observational journalism i.e. question time, courts, hearings | • More than a reliance on passive reporting  
• Uses original sources and/or content  
• The story would not have made the public sphere at this time if it were not for the journalist's investigative efforts | 1 |
| **3. Is there evidence of time/effort by the journalist?** | • Evidence of time or effort – looking for any mention of: resources/ no. of interviews/ travel/ FOI requests/etc  
• More information and detail than what is expected from a daily news report | • May be evidenced through, or reference to: case studies, interviews, documents, witnesses, time to travel to location, which are included in article/s. Or, time taken to get important, exclusive interview. Or, part of an ongoing series | 1 |
| **4. Does the story actually investigate?** | • Story goes beyond duelling anecdotes of allegation and denial, which often feature in news reporting  
• There are serious attempts to verify the information, and not just report it  
• Evidence that time was involved in producing the story for print  
• Leaves the reader clearer about where the 'truth' lies because of the investigative efforts | • Verifies allegations with supporting documents/ witness accounts, i.e. not just he said/ she said  
• Uses information beyond quoted protagonists  
• Journalist's time and effort evident in the story (trying to contact for comment and not succeeding is not sufficient) | 1 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Does the story belong in the public sphere? Does it have political relevance, as opposed to voyeurism? (i.e. scandalous journalism)</th>
<th>• Identifies a political characteristic to the story (which is what the public sphere enables), and answers why it belongs in the public sphere • Attempts to hold public figures to account on behalf of the public by interviewing them or relevant authorities</th>
<th>• Does it involve a profile of at least one of following political figures: politician, public entity (i.e. government, statutory authority), public servant • Or, it is a private figure using public resources, or a private figure whose actions have harmed the public, (i.e. public funds required for reconstitution)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Is the story relevant to the Australian public sphere?</td>
<td>• Written about Australia, or Australian-centric issues</td>
<td>• The story is about Australians or Australian issues (which are central, not peripheral to the story)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Does it identify victims and villains?</td>
<td>• The powerless given a voice against the powerful</td>
<td>• Powerless/powerful explicitly mentioned in story? Or, 'victim/s' quoted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Does the story investigate a breach of public trust?</td>
<td>• The story shows that: The public have been misled; rules/laws have been transgressed, or evidence that a public official has acted with impropriety</td>
<td>• Reveals information that shows a transgression of rules/laws/social norms that is, in someway, harmful to the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Does the investigation pursue a suppressed truth (and is in the public interest)?</td>
<td>• Uncovers important information that someone/thing has suppressed for reasons of self benefit at the expense of others</td>
<td>• 'Truth' benefits the public somehow, and it's information not previously disclosed, and 'truth' is revealed in the story • It takes time and effort to reveal truth because of active suppression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Is a moral standard implied?</td>
<td>• Story operates within a moral framework. It upholds or identifies a normative value i.e. it polices public order and identifies deviance</td>
<td>• It says why the story is important to the public • It assumes a normative societal standard and indicates how that has been breached • Explicitly identifies a perversion of normative societal values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author*
Appendix C

An Example of Australian Investigative Journalism

The following story by *Age* investigative journalist Nick McKenzie is one of the 232 investigative stories identified, located and analysed as part of the research for this thesis. It was part of a story series and is included here (in full) to provide an illustration of a 'green' zone story. In this story, each of the 10 fields of the operative definition was met (see Appendix B). It is reproduced in its digital archival format with permission from the author. McKenzie's report earned him the 2008 Walkley Award for 'Sport News Reporting', showing that investigative journalism can be about many subjects. But the key elements are here: it calls to account those who have transgressed the rules of society, and abused their power in some way.

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

June 14, 2008 Saturday
Second Edition

Jockey took Mokbel cash

EXCLUSIVE - CRIME AND RACING - Crime boss paid for tips

BYLINE: Nick Mckenzie, Age Investigative Unit

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 1098 words

ONE of Australia's leading jockeys, Jim Cassidy, accepted bundles of cash from alleged crime boss Tony Mokbel in return for tips about horses he was riding.
Cassidy, a Sydney jockey who has won the Melbourne Cup twice, accepted more than $50,000 from the alleged crime boss in return for a number of winning tips given from 1997 onwards.

An Age investigation has found that Mokbel laundered millions of dollars through Australia's racing industry, while paying a small number of jockeys and trainers for tips in an effort to improve his betting odds. Jockeys and trainers are banned from tipping in return for money. Racing figures also bought horses for Mokbel and his associates and rented properties owned by the Mokbel family.

The Age can also reveal deep ties between leading Victorian bookmaker Frank Hudson and Mokbel, including secret dealings the pair had in relation to an inner-city apartment worth more than $1 million.

It is believed law enforcement officials suspect at least one Victorian bookmaker wrote cheques to Mokbel in return for cash amounts, despite no bets being laid.

Before computerised systems were introduced around 2001, bookies are also believed to have entered bets for Mokbel at the completion of a race, guaranteeing him a win. A well-placed source called it "the purest form of money laundering".

The revelations have sparked calls for legislative and other reforms from chief Victorian steward Des Gleeson and former chief New South Wales and Hong Kong steward John Schreck.

Mokbel first came to the attention of police in the late 1980s and early '90s and received his first serious conviction in 1992. In 1998, he was jailed on drug trafficking charges, later overturned, before being charged again in August 2001. Victorian racing officials raised serious concerns about Mokbel with police in 1998 and in April 1999 banned him from owning horses.

Cassidy tipped to Mokbel or his associates several times over a number of years. It is believed his association with Mokbel continued after warnings from stewards in 2001.

One of Cassidy's earliest tips is believed to have involved a horse called Bezeal Bay, which Cassidy rode to victory in a minor race at the 1997 Geelong Cup carnival.
As asked to comment on the matter by The Age yesterday, Cassidy said: "Your paper can go f--- themselves. And so can you."

Cassidy, who won the Melbourne Cup in 1983 and 1997, has also won the Golden Slipper, Cox Plate and Caulfield Cup.

He was banned from racing for 21 months in 1995, after the "Jockey Tapes" scandal, in which he and two jockeys were accused of tipping and pretending to fix the outcome of a race.

In the late '90s and early 2000s, stewards also warned several other jockeys to stay away from Mokbel, including Danny Nikolic, who was for a period closely associated with Mokbel, and Damien Oliver. Stewards believe that both Oliver and Nikolic heeded the warnings.

Many racing figures who dealt with Mokbel or his associates claim to have had little idea of who he was and blame stewards or the police for not informing them.

Caulfield trainer John Salinitri worked very briefly for Mokbel in 1996, until champion Queensland jockey Gavan Duffy moved to Mokbel's farm, "Somerset", to train for him.

Mr Duffy returned to Queensland after police raided the farm in 1997 and arrested a Mokbel associate for drug trafficking.

Subsequent Mokbel trainers included Brendan McCarthy, who trained for Mokbel between 1998 and 2000. McCarthy gave tips to Mokbel about a horse he trained called Regal Star, but never received a promised payment.

Trainer Jim Conlan, however, received tens of thousands of dollars from Mokbel in return for successful tips.

In April 1999, Conlan also bought for Mokbel a $100,000 horse called Danislew, whose ownership was later transferred to Mokbel associates Jack Doumani and Sydney horse owner Mark Kassis.

Mr Conlan has stressed to friends that while training for Mokbel or his associates, or when giving tips, he was unaware Mokbel was a crime figure.

In 2002, trainer Peter Moody took over the Caulfield stables used by Mr Conlan and began renting them from Tony's brother, Harty Mokbel.
Moody was accused last year in a police affidavit of registering in his wife's name a horse, Pillar of Hercules, that was bought by Horty Mokbel in 2006. Horty Mokbel was charged with drug trafficking last year.

Before fleeing overseas, Tony Mokbel lived rent free, and spent more than $100,000 on renovations, at a Melbourne apartment ostensibly owned by leading Victorian bookmaker Frank Hudson.

In October 2004, Hudson was caught running an unlicensed betting operation in Sydney with two other Melbourne men, Hass Taiba and Michael Khodr.

The Age can reveal that both men are close Mokbel associates. Hudson was banned by NSW racing authorities for a year and fined $50,000 for working without a licence in Sydney, while Khodr was fined $15,000.

Hudson refused to comment to The Age about his apartment or links to Khodr and Taiba. "I don't care what you write. I couldn't care less," Hudson said.

Khodr, who was charged with drug offences in 2006, and Taiba are among several so-called "commission agents" who freely bet millions of dollars on behalf of Mokbel and his associates for almost a decade.

Chief Victorian steward Des Gleeson said the licensing of commission agents was among several reforms that Victorian and other racing authorities needed to address.

"There needs to be a legislative change in Victoria," said Mr Gleeson, urging other states to follow suit.

He said some of Mokbel's racing activities went unchecked because stewards were hamstrung by a lack of powers and police failed to provide support.

"From 1998 to 2005, there was a void there where we didn't get any information (from police) basically at all. Since the Purana gangland taskforce has been in operation we have (got support). But we would like to have constant meetings and information exchange with the police force."

Mr Gleeson said changes to the law, in Victoria and nationwide, might be needed to enable racing officials to have access to police information when appropriate.
A Victoria Police spokesman said Purana had built strong links with racing officials that it "hoped to build on and develop in the future."

Mr Schreck also called for reforms to prevent organised crime figures infiltrating racing.

"I think people have been reluctant to admit that racing oversight needs to be reviewed. There is a need to jump into the present day in investigative processes," he said.

Tony Mokbel was extradited from Greece this year to face drug trafficking and murder charges.
# Appendix D

## Australia's Start-up News Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site &amp; Founder</th>
<th>Start-up Year Online Model</th>
<th>Primary Content</th>
<th>Revenue Model</th>
<th>Considered Investigative Journalism? Y/N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trendsmap</strong> John Barrett</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Tracks Twitter trends. Produser* generated: data and maps used to show trending Twitter topics globally</td>
<td>Sell data/ interface: marketed to advertising agencies and companies</td>
<td>N <a href="http://trendsmap.com/">http://trendsmap.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newsflock</strong> Chris Were</td>
<td>2012*</td>
<td>Will aim to attract news content around communities 'to build a better democracy' User-generated: bringing communities together around topics</td>
<td>Incorporates an undisclosed revenue model</td>
<td>N <a href="http://www.newsflock.com">http://www.newsflock.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newsgraf</strong> Bronwen Clune</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>A weekly newsletter directed at 'informing the informers' Producer-generated, curating media content about the media</td>
<td>Non commercial</td>
<td>N <a href="http://www.newsgraf.com">http://www.newsgraf.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>eReporter</strong> Rakhal Ebeli</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Broker for 'witness footage' user-generated, commercial media fees for witness footage</td>
<td>Commission from buyer for brokerage</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OurSay</strong> Eyal Halamish</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>e-Governance: Connects people with politicians online User-generated and collaborations with traditional media, organisations, etc</td>
<td>Strategic partnerships</td>
<td>N <a href="http://oursay.org/the-team">http://oursay.org/the-team</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Source: Author; Centre for Advanced Journalism, 'What’s Next in News Media?' Melbourne: University of Melbourne: Seminar 29 October 2012. Notes: *A producer of content, but also reliant on user-generated content ** Not online (2012).