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## Media ownership and regulation: a chronology Part one: from print to radio days and television nights

Dr Rhonda Jolly  
Social Policy Section

### Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	2
<b>Colonial publications</b> .....	2
Box 1: the object of publishing the <i>Gazette</i> .....	3
Figure 1: The <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> reports on the federation of the Australian colonies .....	5
<b>1901–1922: broadcasting powers, wartime censorship, the Herald and Weekly Times and Keith Murdoch</b> .....	5
Box 2: Parliamentary protest: censorship of the press .....	11
<b>1923–1938: sealed and open radio systems, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, consolidating the Murdoch, Packer and Fairfax dynasties and a Royal Commission</b> .....	11
Figure 2: radio: entertainment to the home .....	12
Box 3: Hammond Royal Commission: if it ain't broke don't fix it .....	19
<b>1939–1949: censorship, the Broadcasting Act, licences and a regulator</b> .....	19
Figure 3: early ABC broadcasting .....	20
<b>1950–1956: British interests, Murdoch junior, the Paton Commission and first television licences issued</b> .....	26
Box 4: Gibson Committee—an oblique reference to media concentration ..	26
Figure 4: Bruce Gyngall: welcome to television .....	28
Box 5: the Paton commission on television: regulation tempered by agreement .....	32
<b>1957–1971: new stations, ownership concentrates, Australian content and FM deferred</b> .....	32
Box 6: 1971: a journalist's comment on the print media environment .....	33
Figure 5: Australian content 1964: 'homegrown' detectives on <i>Homicide</i> .....	34
Figure 6: Rupert Murdoch and the birth of the <i>Australian</i> .....	39
Box 7: Clyde Packer's ownership concerns .....	44

## Introduction

The first newspaper was printed in Australia less than two decades after the First Fleet arrived in 1788. The paper was subject to government censorship, and as a consequence, one commentator has (somewhat harshly perhaps) described its reporting as a mixture of sycophancy and frivolous nonsense.<sup>1</sup> Government censorship of the press decreased from 1824 onwards, and the print media has since that time for the most part enjoyed considerable freedom from specific government regulation. Government actions, however, in relation to broadcasting control and ownership and with respect to other issues, such as wartime censorship, have affected the way in which Australian newspapers conduct their business.

As for the broadcasting media, there were specific broadcasting powers included in the Australian Constitution, and one of the earliest pieces of federal legislation expressly imposed licensing, operational and technical standards, albeit that in 1901 there were no actual broadcast media in operation. From the 1920s, when radio stations first began to broadcast to the public, they were subject to government restrictions in a number of forms, including licensing requirements.

At the time of the first radio broadcasts there were many and varied media voices—26 capital city daily newspapers were published for example, and 21 of these were independently owned.<sup>2</sup> Diversity of ownership began to diminish from the mid-1920s, however, and by the 1930s, media concentration had reached a stage where government became concerned that the lack of diversity in media voices was not adequately serving the public interest. Consequently, from that time, various governments have attempted to address media concentration by regulatory means—some by strengthening, others by relaxing it. However, despite these strategies, Australia now has one of the most concentrated media environments in the world.<sup>3</sup>

This chronology traces the story of media ownership concentration and control since 1901 and the government policies and regulations that have responded to, or attempted to pre-empt the trend towards concentration that has occurred since the 1920s. It provides an outline and brief explanation of, and where possible, links to government investigations and regulatory frameworks for the media since Federation. In so doing, it illustrates the ways in which regulations have affected, and in turn have been affected by, changes in ownership and control of both print and broadcasting media.

The chronology will be published in three parts. Part one traces the development of the media from colonial times to the end of 1971. Part two of the chronology continues the story from 1972 to the end of 1995. The final part of the chronology deals with the period from 1996 to the present.

## Colonial publications

Australia's first newspaper, the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, was initially published by George Howe, the second New South Wales Government Printer, on 5 March 1803.<sup>4</sup> The *Gazette*, which was printed with government ink, on government paper and by a government printing press, was not surprisingly, subject to strict government control.<sup>5</sup> Eminent media academic, Henry Mayer, noted in his assessment of the press in Australia in 1964 that it was claimed the paper's content was a mixture of 'fulsome flattery of Government officials' and 'inane twaddle'.<sup>6</sup> Another assessment of the *Gazette's* content is shown in Box 1 below:

1. H Mayer, *The Press in Australia*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1964, p. 10. Mayer cites HM Green 'Australia's first newspaper and its founder' in JA Ferguson, AG Foster and HM Green, *The Howes and their press*, Sydney, 1936, p. 94.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
3. R Harding-Smith, [Media ownership and regulation in Australia](#), Centre for Policy Development, Sydney, 2011, accessed 11 December 2014.
4. A printing press had been transported to the colony with the First Fleet in 1788. It was used at first only for the printing of government orders and proclamations, but after George Howe became the government printer in 1802 he obtained the permission of Governor King to collect materials and to publish them in the form of a weekly newspaper—subject to the Governor's approval. More information on Howe can be found in JV Byrnes, '[George Howe](#)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1, 1966, accessed 11 December 2014.
5. Australian Newspaper History Group Newsletter (ANHG), 21 February 2003.
6. HM Green, 'Australia's first newspaper and its founder' in Ferguson et al., in Mayer, op. cit., p. 10.

### Box 1: the object of publishing the *Gazette*

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported in 1935 on the origins of the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*:

... in pursuance of Governor King's desire 'that the settlers and inhabitants at large should be benefited by useful information being dispersed among them', [Howe] was entrusted with the foundation and conduct—under censorial supervision—of our newspaper.

A second object of King's was the more efficacious publication of Government orders and proclamations, and these, or in their absence in any particular week—for the paper appeared only weekly—some important advertisement, constituted the introduction and principal part of the opening page.

The rest of the paper consisted of local news, dressed up humorously whenever there was any excuse and sometimes when there was none; overseas news cut out of English papers or built up out of private letters and verbal information obtained from the latest arrivals by ship; advertisements, practical and instructive articles, and letters, many of which obviously originated in the printing office.

There was for some years no lead article, though the first issue of the *Gazette* contained an 'address' to the reader, and other similar communications appeared now and then, particularly when Howe felt obliged to urge upon his subscribers the fact that he could not live and supply them without money.<sup>7</sup>

From 1810, other newspapers began to appear in the colonies. The first of these was the short-lived *Derwent Star*, and another was the *Van Diemen's Land Intelligencer* (1814), both published in Tasmania. In July 1854, John Davies, who had been convicted of fraud in 1830 and sentenced to transportation for seven years, established the *Hobart Mercury*.<sup>8</sup> It was renamed *The Mercury* in 1860. The newspaper was owned by the Davies family until 1985 when it became a wholly owned subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd.

Until 1824, any papers published were censored by colonial authorities, but this situation began to change with the publication of the first issue of the *Australian* (not the current title of that name) which was declared to be published 'without prior restraint' by William Charles Wentworth and Robert Wardell.<sup>9</sup>

From 1826 to 1830, the Governor of New South Wales (NSW), Ralph Darling, attempted to legislate to licence newspapers and to impose stamp duties on publications. Governor Darling argued that censorship of the press was imperative because newspapers caused discontent among the colony's convicts, thereby imperilling the safety of the colony.<sup>10</sup>

Chief Justice of the colony, Francis Forbes, declared much of Darling's legislation repugnant:

... every free man has the right of using the common trade of printing and publishing newspapers; by the proposed bill this right is confined to such persons only as the Governor may deem proper. By the laws of England, the liberty of the press is regarded as a constitutional privilege, which liberty consists in exemption from previous restraint - by

7. HM Green, '[George Howe: Australia's first newspaper](#)', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 April 1935, p. 10, accessed 13 March 2015

8. FC Green, '[John Davies](#)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 4, 1972, accessed 11 December 2014.

9. M Persse, '[William Charles Wentworth](#)' and CH Currey, '[Robert Wardell](#)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2, 1967, accessed 11 December 2014.

10. It should be added that Darling had been severely criticised by the *Australian* in a number of instances. One of these was his handling of the Suds and Thompson case, which involved two soldiers who had committed a crime to escape military service. Incidences of crimes committed by the lower ranks had increased as a result of a growing perception among emancipists and ex-convicts in the colony had more opportunity to acquire wealth than soldiers on a military engagement. Suds and Thompson were sentenced to seven years' transportation to a secondary penal colony, but Governor Darling determined to make an example of the men and increased the punishment to seven years' hard labour. Darling also placed the prisoners in heavier than normal chains with an additional spiked collar attached to ankle fetters so that neither man could stand fully upright or lie down. It was claimed this punishment resulted in Suds' death. The *Australian* accused Darling of torture and abuse of authority. The Library Committee of the Commonwealth of Australia, *Historical Records of Australia*, series 1, [Governors' despatches to and from England](#), Volume XIII, January 1827 – February 1828, William Applegate Gullick, Government Printer, Sydney, 1920, accessed 11 December 2014..

the proposed bill a preliminary licence is required which is to destroy the freedom of the press and to place it at the discretion of the Government.<sup>11</sup>

Darling's attempt to introduce stamp duty was also rejected by Justice Forbes who saw the proposed legislation as 'an indirect attempt to deprive newspaper publishers of their trade'.<sup>12</sup>

In April 1831, the first issue of the *Sydney Herald* (now Australia's oldest continuously published newspaper) was published by Alfred Ward Stephens, Frederick Michael Stokes and William McGarvie.<sup>13</sup> The *Herald* first appeared as a weekly publication, but it became a daily in 1840, a year before it was purchased by John Fairfax, in partnership with Charles Kemp.<sup>14</sup> In 1842, the paper changed its title to the *Sydney Morning Herald*. After Kemp sold his interest in the paper to Fairfax in 1853, the paper continued to be published by the Fairfax family company for 137 years.

According to Victor Isaacs' and Rod Kirkpatrick's history of Sydney newspapers, the *Sydney Herald* 'struck a chord with the upper class of the growing colony' and it soon overhauled its competitors in sales and advertising.<sup>15</sup> The *Sydney Morning Herald* (*SMH*) continued to espouse 'strong views about what was "right and proper"' and for over a hundred years it 'could be relied upon as the upholder of conservative views on politics, society and economics'.<sup>16</sup> In the nineteenth century the *SMH* espoused such views on issues ranging from what it saw as a waste of public money, on proposals for Aboriginal welfare to condemnation of the 'wanton aggression against authority' at the Eureka Stockade in 1854.<sup>17</sup>

The first newspaper published in Victoria in 1838 by John Pascoe Fawkner was the handwritten *Melbourne Advertiser*.<sup>18</sup> And although this illegal publication lasted only a few months, a number of other publications followed the launch of Faulkner's enterprise. While all were launched in anticipation of success, many lacked the capital needed to survive. There were, of course, some notable exceptions, one of which, the *Port Phillip Herald*, began in 1840. In 1849 the *Port Phillip Herald*, changed its name to the *Melbourne Morning Herald* and in 1868 it was bought by David Syme, joint owner with his brother Ebenezer, of another Melbourne publication, the *Age*.<sup>19</sup>

The *Age*, which had been founded in 1854 by the mercantile company, Francis Cook, and bought by Ebenezer Syme in June 1856, was yet another exception. Ebenezer Syme was joined by his brother in his publishing enterprise in 1857 and within five years the paper had become commercially successful. The *Age* remained in family hands until 1983, when it was sold by David Syme's great-grandson, Ranald Macdonald, to the Fairfax Company.<sup>20</sup>

In 1830, the first West Australian 'newspapers' appeared—one of which was a handwritten sheet pinned to a tree.<sup>21</sup> By 1833, the *Perth Gazette and West Australian Journal* was being printed. In 1836, the *South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register* began publication. The *South Australian Advertiser*, later to become the *Advertiser*, began publication in 1858. The *Advertiser* was eventually one of three papers owned by John Langdon Bonython, its stablemates being the *Adelaide Express* (an evening daily) and the *Chronicle* (a weekly).<sup>22</sup> In Brisbane, the predecessor of the *Courier Mail* was established in 1846 as the *Moreton Bay Courier*. This paper

11. E Campbell, '[Colonial legislation and the laws of England](#)', *University of Tasmania Law Review*, 2(2)?, 1965, pp. 148–75, accessed 13 January 2015.

12. Ibid.

13. JV Byrnes, '[Alfred Ward Stephens](#)' and '[William McGarvie](#)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2, 1967, accessed 13 January 2015.

14. JO Fairfax, '[John Fairfax](#)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 4, 1972 and GJ Abbott, '[Charles Kemp](#)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2, 1967, accessed 20 January 2015

15. V Isaacs and R Kirkpatrick, *Two hundred years of Sydney newspapers: a short history*, Rural Press, North Richmond, New South Wales (NSW), 2003, accessed 26 August 2014.

16. Ibid.

17. G Souter, *Company of Heralds: a century and a half of Australian publishing*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1981, pp. 35 and 57.

18. H Anderson, '[John Pascoe Faulkner](#)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1, 1966, accessed 26 August 2014.

19. CE Sayers, '[David Syme](#)' and '[Ebenezer Syme](#)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 6, 1976, accessed 13 January 2015.

20. Article in M Lyons and J Arnold, eds, *A history of the book in Australia 1891–1945: a national culture in a colonised market*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2001.

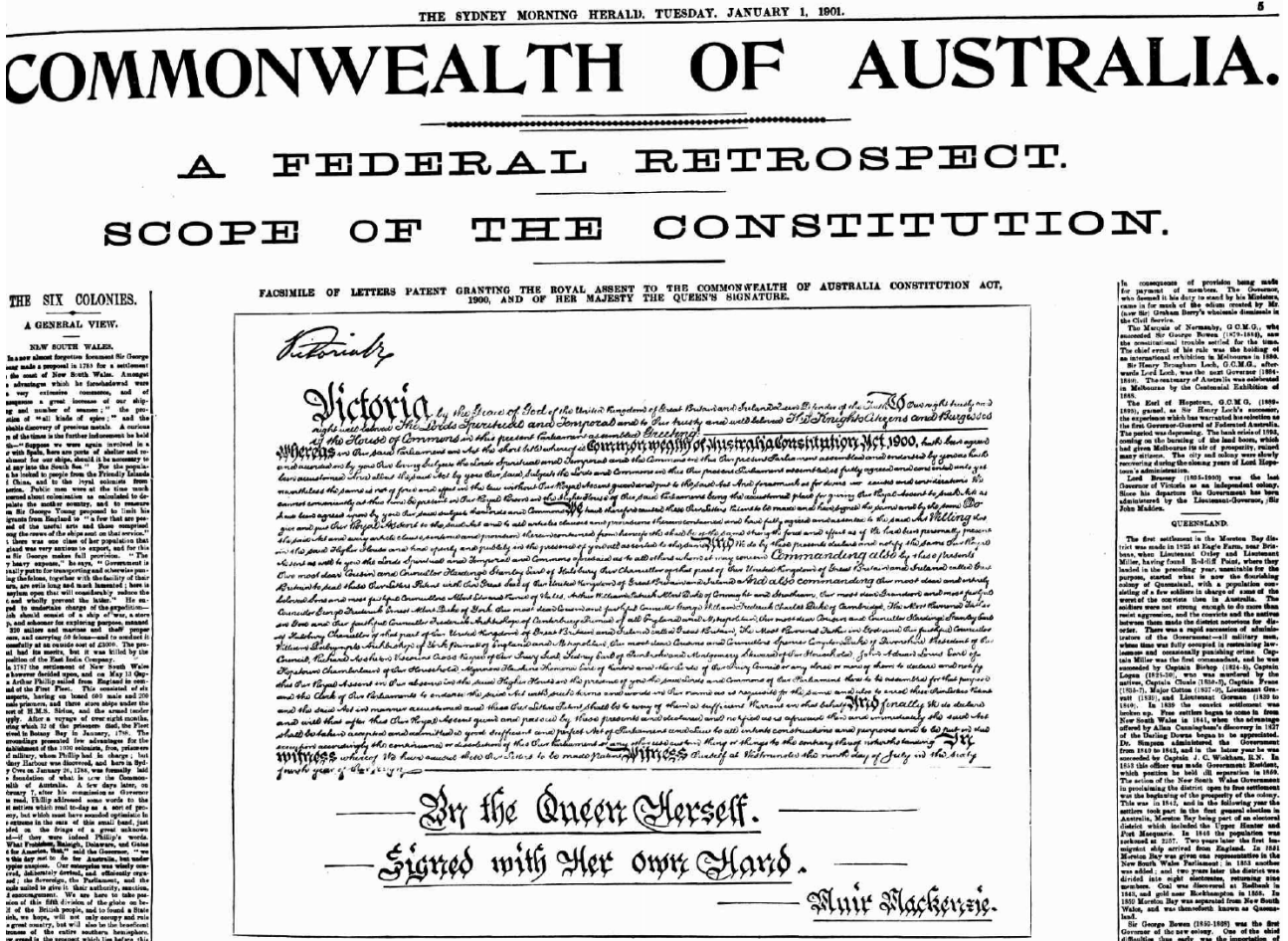
21. State Library of Western Australia, '[More about newspapers in Western Australia](#)', accessed 26 August 2015.

22. See a more detailed [early press timeline \(1802–1850\)](#) compiled by R Kirkpatrick on the National Library of Australia website, accessed 12 June 2015 and EJ Prest, *Sir John Langdon Bonython: newspaper proprietor, politician and philanthropist*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne, 2011.

changed its masthead to the *Courier* in 1861 and merged with the *Daily Mail* (which had been established in 1903) in 1933 to form the *Courier Mail*.

Near the end of the nineteenth century (in 1892) there were 599 metropolitan daily and weekly, suburban and country newspapers and magazines published in Australia. Of these, 466 were published in country areas. In NSW alone in 1900 there were more than 200 newspapers published.<sup>23</sup>

Figure 1: The *Sydney Morning Herald* reports on the federation of the Australian colonies



Source: *The Sydney Morning Herald*<sup>24</sup>

## 1901–1922: broadcasting powers, wartime censorship, the Herald and Weekly Times and Keith Murdoch

On 1 January 1901, when the Australian colonies joined together to form a new nation, the Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth gave federal governments power to make laws with respect to specifically defined areas (section 51).

While there was no stated press power listed in the section of the Constitution which dealt with federal powers, the Government was still able to make laws that affected the press. Constitutional powers which enabled it to do so included: section 51(i)—to make laws in relation to trade and commerce with other countries and among the states and section 51(ii)—the taxation power.

23. Mayer, op. cit., p. 11.

24. It is interesting that not even for such a momentous event was advertising taken off the first four pages of the paper. The report appeared on page five of the 1 January 1901 edition.

On the other hand, the Constitution gave governments the specific power to make laws concerning ‘postal, telegraphic, telephonic and other like services’. In 1905, the Australian Parliament passed what one commentator notes was a ‘brief yet comprehensive’ *Wireless Telegraphy Act (WT Act)*.<sup>25</sup> This Act gave the federal government control over stations and appliances used for ‘transmitting and receiving telegraphic messages by means of electricity without a continuous metallic connection between the transmitter and the receiver’.<sup>26</sup> As the *Gippsland Times* reported in 1906, the *WT Act* had been enacted to ‘enable the Commonwealth to take advantage of the latest advances in science, and to secure the use of wireless telegraphy for national purposes’.<sup>27</sup> At the time of its passage, ‘neither the desirability of nor the necessity for government control over wireless telegraphy was questioned’.<sup>28</sup>

Prior to World War 1 a number of stations were licensed by the Government to test the transmission of voice signals over radio waves. These stations were subject to military control during the War, but it was not long after the 1918 Armistice that the Government amended the *WT Act* to give it the same control over wireless telephony as it had over wireless telegraphy.

Newspapers were censored during WWI and some complained that despite government insistence the restrictions were for security reasons, the censorship was politically motivated, particularly in relation to the Government’s stance on conscription.<sup>29</sup>

Milestones	Details	Document source
<b>1901–1914</b>		
January 1901	The <i>Australian Constitution</i> gives the Australian Government power to make laws with respect to ‘postal, telegraphic, telephonic and other like services’.  No specific ‘press power’ listed, but the Government still able to make laws that affect the press.	Specific power over broadcasting: <a href="#">section 51(v)</a> . Powers affecting the press: <a href="#">section 51(i)</a> —to make laws in relation to trade and commerce with other countries and among the states—and <a href="#">section 51(ii)</a> —the taxation power.
March 1901	Protectionist Party forms government after first Australian federal election. Edmund Barton becomes Prime Minister. The Protectionists also form government following elections in 1903 and 1906. Alfred Deakin is Prime Minister. <sup>30</sup>	
November 1901	Tasmania lobbies the Federal Government to establish point-to-point wireless telegraphy which would enable direct communication with the mainland.	R Curnow, ‘The origins of Australian broadcasting’, in R Curnow and I Bedford, <i>Initiative and organisation</i> , FW Cheshire, Sydney, 1963, p. 50.
October 1902	Marconi Company submits a proposal to the Government to connect Australia and New Zealand by radio. The Postmaster-General’s Department opposes the scheme arguing that messages	Curnow, op. cit., p. 51.

25. R Curnow, ‘The origins of Australian broadcasting’, in R Curnow and I Bedford, *Initiative and organisation*, FW Cheshire, Sydney, 1963, p. 53.  
 26. A Barnard, ‘AWA, the radio traders and the government in early radio’, in A Moran, (ed), *Stay tuned: the Australian broadcasting reader*, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1992, p. 5.  
 27. ‘[Work of the Deakin Government](#)’, *Gippsland Times*, 26 November 1906, p. 3, accessed 20 January 2015.  
 28. Curnow, ‘The origins of Australian broadcasting’, op. cit., p. 53.  
 29. Souter, *Company of Heralds*, op. cit., pp.116–7, cites memorandum reproduced in Volume XI of the official war history.  
 30. For a detailed analysis of Australian federal elections referred to in this chronology, see S Barber and S Johnson, [Federal election results 1901–2014](#), Research paper series 2014–15, Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 17 July 2014, accessed 20 January 2015.

Milestones	Details	Document source
	are already transmitted more cheaply by cable.	
1902 <sup>31</sup>	The Herald & Weekly Times (HWT) is incorporated as a public company.	Museum Victoria, <a href="#">Herald and Weekly Times information page</a>
October 1905	<i>Wireless Telegraphy Act 1905</i> (WT Act) is enacted to give control of licensing and operational and technical standards for wireless broadcasting to the Postmaster-General's Department. <sup>32</sup>	<a href="#">Wireless Telegraphy Act 1905</a> <sup>33</sup>
August 1906	After demonstrations of Morse Code communications, Marconi Company wireless stations are set up in Queenscliff in Victoria and Davenport in Tasmania, and the Government sets aside funding for the development of wireless.	A Chapman, 'Answer to Question without notice: Supply' [Questioner: H Wilkes], House of Representatives, <i>Debates</i> , 22 August 1906, pp. 3251–2.
April 1910	The Labor Party, under the leadership of Andrew Fisher, wins the 1910 federal election.	
July 1910	Businessman and philanthropist HR Denison forms Sun Newspapers Ltd to take over the publication of papers based in Sydney, the <i>Sunday Sun</i> and the <i>Star</i> (which he renames <i>The Sun</i> ). Denison remains chairman of this company until 1940. <sup>34</sup>	<a href="#">HR Denison</a> , <i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entry.  D Zwar, <i>In search of Keith Murdoch</i> , Macmillan, Melbourne, 1980, pp. 17–18.  J Denison, <i>Building a nation: Hugh Robert Denison</i> , author published, Mosman, 2004.
October 1910	Following the recommendations of a Senate Select Committee on press cables, the Government subsidises an independent cable service, the Independent Press Cable Service, for three years. All newspapers are able to subscribe to the service at rates set by the Government.	Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, <i>Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia</i> , no. 4, 1911.
January 1911	<i>The Land</i> newspaper for primary producers begins publication. The paper is incorporated in the 1920s, and in the 1970s it expands to purchase rural and regional publications.	V Graham, <i>The story of the Land, 1911–2011</i> , John Dwyer, North Richmond, Victoria, 2011.
1912	After funding is set aside in 1909 for wireless installation, a network of government-operated Morse Code stations is established to	B Carty, <i>On the air: Australian radio history</i> , author published,

31. Note: in some instances specific months in which events occurred have not been recorded in the primary or secondary sources I consulted. Such events will be listed at the end of the entries for each year cited in the chronology.

32. This legislation was also prompted by recommendations from the commander of the Australian naval station for the setting up of wireless installations on the Australian coast, Curnow, 'The origins of Australian broadcasting', op. cit., p. 52.

33. Note: while this chronology refers to significant pieces of legislation, other legal instruments and court cases have affected broadcasting and print media ownership and control. The chronology does not attempt to include every piece of relevant legislation or regulatory documents.

34. Denison was originally the managing director of a tobacco manufacturing business. He had loaned £100,000 to the Australian Newspaper Company, publisher of the *Star* in 1908. Within a year of the loan, the company went into liquidation and Denison took over the running of the paper.

Milestones	Details	Document source
	transmit telegrams and provide shipping information.	2011, p. 2 and Curnow, op. cit., pp. 64–6.
May 1913	The Deakin Liberal Party, under the leadership of Joseph Cook, is elected to office. <sup>35</sup>	
July 1913	Amalgamated Wireless Australasia (AWA) is formed from a merger of the Marconi and Telefunken companies. The company becomes a pioneer in early radio broadcasting. Hugh Denison is a major shareholder.	A Moran and C Keating, <i>The A to Z of Australian radio and television</i> , Scarecrow Press, Lanham, 2009, p. xix.
August 1914	In July 1914 the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne by Serbian nationalists leads to an Austro-Hungarian invasion of Serbia, the mobilisation of Russian troops in defence of Serbia and Germany declaring war on Russia and France. When Germany then invades neutral Belgium, Britain declares war on Germany and World War I begins.	
September 1914	The Labor Party wins the federal poll. Andrew Fisher is Prime Minister until October 1915 when he is replaced by WM (Billy) Hughes. The Labor Party splits in 1916 over the issue of conscription. Hughes remains Prime Minister, first as head of a National Labor Government (1916–17) and then as the head of a Nationalist Government (from February 1917).	
<b>1915–1922</b>		
1915–1919	Administration of <i>WT Act</i> is transferred to the Royal Australian Navy during WWI for security purposes.  Experimental radio sets are confiscated by the Navy and licences to operate radios are revoked.	Moran and Keating, op. cit. and Curnow, op. cit., pp. 66–9.
1915–1919	Newspapers are censored for the duration of the War ‘to restrain pro-German and pacifist propaganda’.  Newspaper proprietors and journalists complain that they are unfairly treated as ‘vehemently suspect’ by Australia’s military censors.	G Souter, <i>Company of Heralds: a century and a half of Australian publishing</i> , Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1981, pp. 116–7 and P Coleman ‘Censorship’, in B Griffen-Foley, ed., <i>A companion to the Australian media</i> , Australian Scholarly, North Melbourne, 2014, p. 87.
April 1916	Ezra Norton inherits the newspaper interests of his father, John Norton, owner of the Sydney weekly tabloid, <i>Truth</i> .	<i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entries for <a href="#">John Norton</a> and <a href="#">Ezra Norton</a> and S Hall, ‘The Norton Family’, in Griffen-Foley, ed., pp. 317–8.
May 1915	John Wren and Benjamin Nathan buy the Brisbane <i>Daily Mail</i> .	<a href="#">John Wren</a> , <i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entry

35. While the Deakin Liberal Party, which was a merger of anti-socialist and Protectionist groups, is clearly a forerunner of the current Liberal Party, it is not the same Party. The current Party was formed by Robert Menzies in 1944.

Milestones	Details	Document source
		and Zwar, op. cit., p. 81.
October 1916	John Fairfax and Sons becomes a limited company.	Souter, op. cit., p. 120.
May 1917	The conservative Nationalist Party, a merger between National Labor and the Liberal Party, wins the May federal election.	
March 1918	As a result of press complaints about political, rather than security censorship that newspaper proprietors argue is imposed upon them during the second conscription referendum, a board, upon which editors are represented, is set up to advise the government censors.	<a href="#">‘A muzzled press’</a> , <i>The Australian Worker</i> , 22 March 1917, p. 14. (See also comment in Box 2.)
October 1918	The Government announces in late October 1918 that the press will be required to reduce newsprint consumption by 30 per cent. This restriction is not imposed due to the end of the War.	<a href="#">‘Sydney letter’</a> , <i>Kapunda Herald</i> , 29 November 1918, p. 4.
November 1918	WW1 ends at 11am on the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918 when Germany signs an armistice that had been prepared by Britain and France.	
March 1919	Smith’s Newspapers is established by Claude McKay, James Joynton Smith and Robert Clyde Packer (Frank Packer’s father). The company publishes <i>Smith’s Weekly</i> to 1950.	<i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entries for <a href="#">Claude McKay</a> , <a href="#">Joynton Smith</a> and <a href="#">Robert Clyde Packer</a>
August 1919	AWA publicly broadcasts music and speech in Sydney (and in October 1920 to parliamentarians in Melbourne). AWA establishes the first direct radio communication between Australia and the United Kingdom.	Carty, op. cit., p. 2 and Curnow, op. cit., p. 93.
September 1919	The <i>WT Act</i> is amended to give the Federal Government the same control over wireless telephony (voice transmissions) as it has over wireless telegraphy.	<a href="#">Wireless Telegraphy Act 1919</a> .
December 1919	Billy Hughes’ Nationalists, aided by conservative country parties, form government following the election.	
October 1920	Control of wireless administration is returned from the Navy to the Postmaster-General’s Department.	B Fraser and A Atkinson, (eds), <i>Macquarie encyclopedia of Australian events</i> , rev. edn, Macquarie Library, 1997, p. 526.

Milestones	Details	Document source
January 1921	The 'Hughes Proclamation' extends the remit of the <i>Customs Act 1901</i> to ban communist and Sinn Fein publications which are deemed as seditious. <sup>36</sup>	Coleman, op. cit.
1921	The first radio licence is issued to Charles MacLurcan for 2CM in Sydney.	<a href="#">Radio Heritage Foundation.</a>
1921	Station 3ME, the forerunner of Radio Australia, begins broadcasting.	Carty, op. cit., p. 1.
1921	Keith Murdoch becomes editor of the Herald and Weekly Times company (HWT). <sup>37</sup>	<a href="#">Keith Murdoch, Australian Dictionary of Biography</a> entry.
March 1922	The Federal Government signs an agreement with AWA to develop, manufacture and sell radio equipment. The Government is a shareholder in the company.	Moran and Keating, op. cit., p. xx, Curnow, op. cit., pp. 80–5 and J Given 'Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd' in Griffen-Foley, ed., op. cit., p. 22.
September 1922	HR Denison attempts to challenge Murdoch's HWT in the Melbourne market by producing the <i>Sun News-Pictorial</i> and, later, the <i>Evening Sun</i> .	Denison, <i>Building a nation</i> , op. cit., p. 67.
1922	Postmaster General WG Gibson arranges meetings with interest groups, the intent of which is to devise a system that will support radio broadcasting.	Curnow, op. cit. p. 94.
December 1922	Coalition of anti-Labor parties wins the federal election—the Bruce-Page Nationalist-Country Coalition Government sworn in with Stanley Bruce as Prime Minister.	

36. Customs Proclamation No 24 (T&C 21/B/365), Gazette, 3 February 1921 (No 11 of 1921) and Customs Proclamation No 37 (T&C 21/B/5230), dated 16 June 1921, Gazette, 23 June 1921 (No 55 of 1921). References as cited in R Douglas, 'Saving Australia from sedition: customs, the Attorney General's Department and the administration of peacetime political censorship', *Federal Law Review*, 30, 1, 2002, p. 141.

37. Murdoch began his career in newspapers working for David Syme. In 1914 after his application for appointment as an official Australian war correspondent went to C EW Bean, in 1915 as managing editor of the United Cable Service (of the *Sun* and *Melbourne Herald*) in London he reported first hand on the progress of the Gallipoli campaign. His report praised the Australian forces at Gallipoli and attacked the performance of the British army at all levels. After WWI Murdoch returned to Australia and in 1920 he was hired by Theodore Fink, chairman of Herald and Weekly Times Ltd (HWT), as chief editor. In March 1924 he became managing director of HWT.

## Box 2: Parliamentary protest: censorship of the press

Comment on restrictions of press freedom by William Findalson (Labor Member for Brisbane, 1910–1919), 8 February 1917:<sup>38</sup>

'Is it not about time that the stupid press censorship in Australia was stopped? Is it not about time that instead of the words about freedom in Australia flowing so glibly from the lips of the Prime Minister he allowed us to get back to the first qualification in regard to freedom, and that is a free speech and a free press?

There is no other country in the world to-day—and I make no exception—where there is a greater limitation on speech and on the press than in Australia. Yet the archpriest of the whole thing is the man who most glibly talks about freedom and liberty.

I want to protest most vigorously against the continuation of this press censorship, which is stupid, which is foolish, which is only breeding trouble. One of these days the system will burst, and the Government that is responsible for the system, and particularly the Minister who is responsible for its existence, will have to answer to an outraged public for the limitation which he imposed on the press and the people at a time when we should have free, frank, and full discussion.

If anything that ought to be said is stopped by a stupid press censorship, you may be certain that the more you dam the current of people's thoughts, you are only hastening for yourselves the time when the dam will burst, and a flood will overwhelm you ...

Before we adjourned last year, the Prime Minister promised that the restriction on the press would be withdrawn. He gave a most solemn assurance that there would be no restriction on the press or on the platform, yet day after day returned soldiers are afraid to speak.

I have a letter from a returned soldier, in which he says "One of these days I will be able to tell you some things, and they will be of use to you, but I dare not speak now".

I say here now, as I said eighteen months ago, that the biggest obstacle to recruiting is the way in which returned soldiers are being treated, the way in which their mouths are being closed; the way in which they are prevented from saying what they ought to say in regard to their treatment.

I am not going to make an appeal to the Prime Minister to withdraw the restriction on the press and on free speech. I only make the statement that it is a disgrace to Australia, and that someday the people will reward the Prime Minister for his outrageous conduct'.

## 1923–1938: sealed and open radio systems, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, consolidating the Murdoch, Packer and Fairfax dynasties and a Royal Commission

The first public demonstrations of broadcasting took place in Sydney in 1919 and soon after this event the Government began to investigate how a broadcasting system could function and how it should be regulated. Following a series of meetings held during 1922 and a conference convened in 1923, agreement was reached between the Government and media interests that radio should be supervised by the Postmaster-General's Department to ensure that undesirable matter was not broadcast over the airways.

From the onset, there were those who doubted if the Government would be able to retain absolute control over the new medium.<sup>39</sup>

The owners of newspapers were not enthusiastic about the arrival of radio; some claimed it was likely that broadcasters would 'pirate' print news stories without providing compensation to sources. They were assured by the Government—'rather naively' according to one historian—that this would not occur.<sup>40</sup>

38. W Findlayson, 'Supply Bill (No. 4) 1916-17', House of Representatives, *Debates*, 8 February 1917, accessed 12 June 2015. Note: for ease of reading, paragraphs have been inserted in the original text.

39. Curnow, op. cit., p. 98.

40. *The Argus*, 25 May 1923, cited on p. 10 in Curnow, op. cit., p. 98.

Radio became available to the public in 1923 when what was called a 'sealed set' system of broadcasting was introduced. Under this system listeners paid subscriptions to have their radio sets 'sealed' to a particular station or stations. Listeners also had to pay a government licence fee. Only four stations commenced operation under the sealed system, however, and only 1,400 listeners bought subscriptions.<sup>41</sup> In short, the sealed system was an outstanding failure. It was replaced in 1924 with an 'open' system. The new system comprised two groups of stations—Class A and Class B stations.

Class A stations received revenue from licence fees paid by listeners and from limited advertising. All revenues for Class B stations came from advertising.<sup>42</sup> In 1929, the Federal Government acquired all Class A stations which were then operated by the Postmaster-General's Department with programming supplied by the Australian Broadcasting Company.

**Figure 2: radio: entertainment to the home**



Source: Langhans<sup>43</sup>

In 1927, a Royal Commission investigated the radio broadcasting system as it existed and concluded that direct government control over broadcasting was inadvisable. At the same time, the Commission was convinced that the system would benefit from co-operation between Class A and Class B stations and from an overarching supervision by

41. Curnow, op. cit., p. 101.

42. R Langhans, *The first twelve months of radio broadcasting in Australia: 1923–1924*, Historical Radio Society of Australia, 2013, accessed 15 December 2014.

43. Ibid. Note: advertisement taken from the *Wireless Weekly*, 29 August 1924.

the Postmaster-General's Department. The Commission made a number of important recommendations with regards to the administration of the system, including those relating to broadcasters' licence fees and what conditions should apply to location, power and frequency, operating conditions and advertising.

At the time the first radio licence was issued there were 26 capital city newspapers published on a daily basis. These were controlled by 21 independent owners.<sup>44</sup> But once radio licences were issued it became clear that these were dominated by major newspaper owners. Consequently, it was not long before public concern was expressed about increasing ownership concentration. In response to such concerns, the Government introduced regulation under the *WT Act* to restrict the number of commercial broadcasting stations that could be owned by an individual or by a company. There were immediate protests from media proprietors about the unfairness of these restrictions, but while the Government relaxed its original proposal, limits on ownership were a reality for media owners from 1935.<sup>45</sup>

The genesis of the Murdoch and Packer media dynasties can be traced to the first years of the twentieth century. In 1921 Keith Murdoch, on his return to Australia after reporting the Gallipoli campaign and working as managing editor of the United Cable Service for Hugh Denison, had taken up the post of editor of the Melbourne *Herald*. By 1926, he had begun to create a media empire for the Herald and Weekly Times group through his purchase of the *West Australian* in Perth and the *Advertiser* in Adelaide. He also purchased a personal share in Queensland newspapers in partnership with entrepreneur John Wren.

In 1908, Robert Clyde Packer began working as a journalist. By 1919 he was part of the partnership that founded *Smith's Weekly*. In 1923, as part owner of the *Daily Guardian*, he introduced his son Frank to the world of print and to his business partner, EG Theodore, who was to become Frank's mentor and associate in establishing Consolidated Press.<sup>46</sup>

The post-WWI period for John Fairfax and Sons was one of ups and downs, but it also saw the Fairfax family firmly entrenched as one of Australia's media dynasties. The Fairfax flagship, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, was a leader in innovation in printing processes—the company was part of the group that formed Australian Associated Press and began the Australian newsprint industry. And, from March 1930, Fairfax came under the guidance of Warwick Fairfax, who remained in control of the firm for 47 years.

Milestones	Details	Document source
<b>1923–1929</b>		
1923	Twenty six capital city newspapers are published on a daily basis. These are controlled by 21 independent owners. As radio stations are established ownership of these is dominated by the major print owners.	H Mayer, <i>The press in Australia</i> , Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1964, p. 31.
May 1923	After calls from the Association for Development of Wireless in Australia, a conference to discuss the introduction of radio is convened. The conference endorses a so-called 'sealed' set of wireless broadcasting.	P Greeves, <i>The dawn of Australia's radio broadcasting</i> , Electronics Australia, 1993, p. 22.
July–November 1923	The sealed set system of broadcasting (in amplitude modulation, that is, AM) is established under regulations made under the <i>WT Act</i> . Four stations commence operation, one of which, 2SB (later to become 2BL), is supported by newspaper owner Joynton Smith.	Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 1923 (No. 97) and R Langhans, <a href="#">The first twelve months of radio broadcasting in Australia: 1923–1924</a> , Historical Radio Society of Australia, 2013 and Greeves, op. cit., p. 26.

44. Mayer, op. cit., p. 21.

45. Under Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 1935 (Nos. 104 and 120).

46. B Griffen-Foley, *Sir Frank Packer: the young master: a biography*, Harper Collins, Sydney, 2000, Chapter 5.

Milestones	Details	Document source
July 1923	John Langdon Bonython sells the <i>Adelaide Express</i> to James Davidson who establishes an afternoon tabloid, the <i>News</i> , and a public company, News Ltd.	EJ Prest, 'Advertiser (Adelaide)' in Griffen-Foley, (ed.), op. cit., p. 3 and <i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entry for <a href="#">James Edward Davidson</a> .
July 1924	New regulations are introduced for an open set system for radio to replace the sealed set system.	Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 1924 (No. 101) and Langhans, op. cit.
1924	Decimus Mott, a member of the Mott family, which had been involved in print since 1856 when they began Albury's (NSW) first paper, purchases a group of suburban newspapers distributed in Melbourne. Mott develops the Leader Group of newspapers from this purchase.	R Kirkpatrick, 'Mott family' and N Richardson, 'Leader community newspapers', in Griffen-Foley, ed., op. cit., pp. 240 and 281.
March 1925	2FC makes what is thought to be the first ever broadcast of a parliamentary debate when it covers a session of the NSW Legislative Assembly.	Moran and Keating, op. cit., p. xxi.
April 1925	Denison closes the Melbourne <i>Evening Sun</i> after suffering heavy financial losses and sells the <i>Sun News-Pictorial</i> to HWT.	<a href="#">Singleton Argus</a> , 28 April 1925, p. 4.
May 1925	The first ratings-like survey taken by the <i>Argus</i> newspaper reveals radio audience preferences are for programming that features brass band, orchestral or instrumental music.	' <a href="#">Wireless broadcasting. Programming preferences</a> ', <i>The Argus</i> , 30 May 1925, p. 35.
November 1925	Anti-Labor parties retain government in a sweeping election victory.	
January 1926	The Government appoints a Royal Commission, chaired by JH Hammond, to investigate all aspects of wireless broadcasting.	Royal Commission on Wireless, <a href="#">Report of the Royal Commission on Wireless</a> , (Hammond Commission), HJ Green, Government Printer for the State of Victoria, Melbourne, 1927. <sup>47</sup>
September 1926	Murdoch and HWT syndicate (which includes WL Baillieu and Theodore Fink) buys the <i>West Australian</i> from the estate of John Hackett. The syndicate forms the public company West Australian Newspapers (WAN). In the early 1930s Keith Murdoch disposes of the syndicate's interest in WAN. <sup>48</sup>	<a href="#">John Hackett</a> and <a href="#">Theodore Fink</a> , <i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entries.
September 1926	Thomas Shakespeare launches the <i>Canberra Times</i> as a weekly paper (eight months before Parliament House is opened in Canberra).	<i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entry for <a href="#">Thomas Mitchell Shakespeare</a>
January–March 1927	A newspaper tax is imposed by the NSW Government (the Lang Government). This is declared invalid by the High Court in March.	<i>Macquarie encyclopedia</i> , op. cit., p. 520 and <a href="#">John Fairfax &amp; Sons Ltd v New South Wales (1927) 39 CLR 139 [1927] HCA 3</a>

47. Where links are not provided to parliamentary papers cited in this chronology, a number of the papers can be accessed online by interrogating the [Senate Tabled Papers database](#)

48. In 1833, Charles Macfaull launched the *Perth Gazette & Western Journal* which, in 1885, under new owners, was renamed the *West Australian*.

Milestones	Details	Document source
October 1927	Report of the Hammond Royal Commission is released. The report does not recommend substantial administrative changes to the broadcasting system. It rejects the concept of direct control over broadcasting by government, but it supports the ideas of cooperation between stations and a monitoring role for the Postmaster-General's Department. It makes recommendations with regards to the amount and distribution of licence fees as well as the location, power, frequency and operating conditions of stations and advertising restrictions and requirements.	Hammond Commission, op. cit. and Greeves, op. cit., p. 53.
June 1928	Australian Federation of Broadcasting Stations is formed.	' <a href="#">Wireless: station rivalry</a> ', <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 29 June 1928, p. 10.
July 1928	Federal Government announces that it will take over all A class radio stations.	Greeves, op. cit., p. 60.
November 1928	Bruce Coalition Government returns to office with a reduced majority.	
December 1928	HWT-Murdoch-led syndicate buys South Australia's oldest paper, the <i>Adelaide Register</i> and Langdon Bonython's <i>Adelaide Advertiser</i> . The <i>Register</i> closes in 1931.	<a href="#">Langdon Bonython</a> , <i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entry and ' <a href="#">Adelaide "Register" sold</a> ', <i>The Daily News</i> 14 December 1928, p. 2.
1929–30	The Federal Government acquires all A class radio stations. These are then operated by the Postmaster-General's Department with programming supplied by the Australian Broadcasting Company. Class B stations are designated as commercial stations. They continue to be regulated by the <i>WT Act</i> .	B Griffen-Foley, <i>Changing stations: the story of Australian commercial radio</i> , University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2009, Chapter 1.
1929	Eight national (formerly A Class and 13 commercial (formerly B Class)) radio licences in operation.	Australian Broadcasting Control Board (ABCB), <i>First Annual Report</i> , LF Johnson, Commonwealth Government Printer, 1949, p. 5.
September 1929	HR Denison forms Associated Newspapers, with Sun Newspapers and the <i>Daily Telegraph News Pictorial</i> , which Denison had acquired in December 1927, as subsidiaries. Associated Newspapers also buys the <i>Sunday Guardian</i> and <i>Daily Guardian</i> from Smith's Newspapers. <sup>49</sup>	Denison, op. cit., p. 75 and <i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entries, HR Denison, <a href="#">S Bennett</a> and <a href="#">Joynton Smith</a>
October 1929	A landslide election victory to the Labor Party, which is led by James Scullin.	
October 1929	On 29 October 1929, Black Tuesday, over 16 million shares are traded on the New York Stock Exchange in a single day. Billions of dollars are lost and the economic devastation caused by the Crash of 1929 is a crucial factor which leads to the Great Depression (1929–39).	
<b>1930–1938</b>		

49. One of the subsidiaries owned by S Bennet also published the *Women's Budget*. This publication was incorporated into Associated Newspaper Holdings and was later renamed *Woman's Day*, Denison, op. cit., p. 75.

Milestones	Details	Document source
1930	There are twenty capital city daily newspapers published and twelve independent owners.	Mayer, op. cit., p. 31.
March 1930	Warwick Fairfax is appointed managing director of John Fairfax and Sons Ltd. He is to control Fairfax for 47 years.	<a href="#">Warwick Fairfax</a> , <i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entry.
June 1930	Following the untimely death of James Edward Davidson, the owners of the <i>Adelaide News</i> (News Ltd) seek financial assistance from HWT to continue operating. Keith Murdoch demands voting rights in the company in return for assistance. This gives him control of the company, which his son Rupert later inherits.	Zwar, op. cit., p. 84.
December 1930	AWA opens 2AY, Albury. It later manages a number of stations (including 2CH, Sydney, for the Council of Churches) on behalf of the owners.	Moran and Keating, op. cit., p. xxii.
1930	Australian Federation of Broadcasting Stations renamed Australian Federation of Commercial Broadcasters. The group, with 33 members, intends to present a unified industry approach to government on broadcasting matters. Copyright and royalty issues are its first lobbying concerns.	<a href="#">Commercial Radio Australia website</a> and <i>Macquarie encyclopedia</i> , op. cit., p. 527 and B Griffen-Foley, 'Commercial Radio Australia', in Griffen-Foley, ed., op. cit., pp. 101–02.
December 1931	The Labor Government is defeated at the polls. The United Australia Party (UAP), under the leadership of Joseph Lyons, is able to form government without having to rely on a coalition with the Country Party.	
July 1932	The Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) is established. The ABC is to control national stations. Newspaper owners, in particular the owners of the HWT under Murdoch's editorship, are opposed to the ABC broadcasting a news service.	<a href="#">Australian Broadcasting Commission Act 1932</a> 'Federal session: Broadcasting Bill: read third time', <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 4 May 1932, p. 15 and TDC Roberts, <i>Before Rupert: Keith Murdoch and the birth of a dynasty</i> , University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2015, pp. 209–14.
November 1932	Frank Packer and EG Theodore (as owners of Sydney Newspapers) make a deal with Hugh Denison that they will not attempt to begin publishing an afternoon paper in Sydney for seven years. Proceeds from the deal allow Packer and Theodore to begin publication of a women's magazine—the <i>Australian Women's Weekly</i> .	<a href="#">Frank Packer</a> and <a href="#">EG Theodore</a> , <i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entries and RS Whittington, <i>Sir Frank: the Frank Packer story</i> , Cassell, North Melbourne, 1971, Chapter 6.
March 1933	Fairfax acquires shares in Sydney radio station 2GB.	Souter, op. cit., p. 314.

Milestones	Details	Document source
June 1933	Frank Packer and EG Theodore publish the first issue of the <i>Australian Women's Weekly</i> .	Whittington, op. cit., p. 126. <sup>50</sup>
August 1933	Keith Murdoch and entrepreneur John Wren merge their newspaper interests in Brisbane to form Queensland Newspapers and the <i>Brisbane Courier</i> and <i>Daily Mail</i> are amalgamated into the <i>Courier-Mail</i> .	Zwar, op. cit., p. 81 and <i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entry for <a href="#">John Wren</a> .
1933	The Albert family and associates' Australian Broadcasting Company acquires the licence for commercial radio station 2UW. By 1956, the company had changed its name and the Alberts had bought out their partners and expanded its holdings to seven commercial radio stations, including 2UW in Sydney and 3DB in Melbourne. <sup>51</sup>	<a href="#">Albert family website</a>
September 1934	United Australia Party wins federal election. It forms a coalition with the Country Party following the election. Joseph Lyons remains Prime Minister.	
July 1935	Australian Associated Press (AAP) is established through the amalgamation of Australian Press Association, run by John Fairfax, Edward Wilson and Lauchlan Mackinnon of the Melbourne <i>Argus</i> and the HWT Cable Service.	S Forde and J Johnston, 'Australian Associated Press', in Griffen-Foley, ed., op. cit., p. 39 and <i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entries for <a href="#">Edward Wilson</a> and <a href="#">Lauchlan Mackinnon</a> .
October 1935	<p>In response to concerns about increasing ownership concentration, regulation is made under the <i>WT Act</i> to restrict the number of commercial broadcasting stations that can be owned by an individual or company. Initially, the rule limits ownership of radio stations to one metropolitan in any one state, a total of two metropolitan stations, three stations in any one state and five stations throughout the country (rule 104).</p> <p>Following immediate protests about these changes from commercial broadcasters, the rule is rescinded and a new rule (Statutory rule 120) is introduced (in November 1935). This rule increases the limits of ownership of stations to four in any one state and eight throughout the country, but keeps the restriction of only one metropolitan station per state.</p>	Wireless Telegraphy Regulations 1935 (Nos. 104 and 120). ' <a href="#">Government control of broadcasting</a> ', <i>The Advertiser</i> (Adelaide), 31 October 1935, p. 18.
October 1935	Broadcasters express concern about the extent of government control over radio and the lack of mechanisms to allow appeals about decisions that are made by the Postmaster-General's Department.	' <a href="#">Radio control: protest against new regulations</a> ', <i>The Canberra Times</i> , 30 October 1935, p. 3.

50. See also copies of [early Australian Women's Weekly](#) publications at the National Library of Australia's Trove website, accessed 15 December 2015.

51. The Australian Broadcasting Company had run A class radio stations under contract from the Government from July 1929 to the end of June 1932. The Scullin Labor Government decided not to renew the company's contract and intended to establish a public corporation to operate a national service. After Labor suffered defeat in January 1932, the United Australia Party Government introduced similar legislation to establish the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC).

Milestones	Details	Document source
December 1935	The High Court rules that the Federal Government has the power under the <i>Constitution</i> to regulate 'broadcasting' (under <a href="#">section 51(v)</a> ). <sup>52</sup>	<a href="#">R v Brislan (1935) 54 CLR 262 [1935] HCA 78</a>  'Control of broadcasting: Commonwealth powers upheld', <i>The Argus</i> , 18 December 1935, p. 8.
1936	Nineteen capital city newspapers published.  Twelve independent owners—Denison's Associated Newspapers, the Shakespeare family's <i>Canberra Times</i> , Fairfax, HWT, Consolidated Press, the Syme Company, Davies Brothers, John Norton's Truth newspapers, West Australian Newspapers, Murdoch's News Ltd and Wilson and McKinnon (owners of the <i>Argus</i> ) and the British firm, International Publishing Corporation.	M Goot, <i>Newspaper circulation in Australia, 1932–77</i> , in P Spearritt and D Walker, (eds), <i>Australian popular culture</i> , George Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1979, p. 213.
January 1936	Frank Packer and EG Theodore make an unsuccessful offer to buy Ezra Norton's <i>Truth</i> .  Packer and Theodore then buy the <i>Daily Telegraph</i> from Hugh Denison on terms that they not establish a Sunday paper for three years.  All three go into partnership as Consolidated Press.	Whittington, op. cit.
January 1936	ABC announces that listeners can purchase a booklet on cricket through its radio stations. Commercial broadcasters and newspaper publishers accuse the national broadcaster of 'invading the publishing field'.	'Editorial', <i>Broadcasting Business</i> , 9 January 1936 in I McKay, <i>Broadcasting in Australia</i> , Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1957, p. 121.
September 1936	Commentary on the ABC's <i>The Watchman</i> program (the Watchman was the on-air identity of commentator EA Mann) at times in conflict with Lyons Government policy.  The Government applies pressure to the broadcaster to censor the program.	A Thomas, 'Political pressure in the ABC', in Moran, op. cit.
1936	Journalist Eric White forms Cumberland Newspapers.	N Richardson, 'Cumberland Newspapers', in Griffen-Foley, ed., op. cit., p. 126.
October 1937	The Lyons Government returned to power at the election held on 23 October.	
December 1937	Radio licences in Australia reach the one million mark. Sixty two per cent of licences in metropolitan areas.	'1,000,000 radio licences', <i>The Argus</i> , 17 December 1937, p. 2.
March 1938	Australian Newsprint Mills established by eight publishers. Directors include Denison, Murdoch and Fairfax.	P Chadwick, <i>Media mates: carving up Australia's media</i> , Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1989, p. xxiv and ' <a href="#">Australian Newsprint Mills</a> ', <i>The West</i>

52. The High Court heard whether Dulcie Williams, a defendant in proceedings before the Court of Petty Sessions at Sydney, was rightly convicted for maintaining without authorisation by or under the *Wireless Telegraphy Act* an appliance for the purpose of receiving messages by wireless telegraphy contrary to the *Wireless Telegraphy Act*.

Milestones	Details	Document source
		<i>Australian</i> , 16 March 1938, p. 14.
June 1938	Keith Murdoch makes an offer on behalf of HWT for an interest in Consolidated Press. This is rejected by Packer and Theodore.	Whittington, op. cit., pp. 144–5.
July 1938	HR Denison founds, and becomes chair of, Macquarie Broadcasting Services, which controls 15 radio stations, including 2GB (Sydney), 3AW (Melbourne) 5DN (Adelaide) and 2CA (Canberra). Networking is promoted as being able to give advertisers better coverage and value for money.	Denison, <i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entry, op. cit.
December 1938	Radio licence of Sydney station 2KY, which is controlled by the NSW Labour Council, is cancelled. No reason is given, but the station had criticised the Lyons Government a number of times. After apologising for its ‘past offences’, 2KY’s licence is renewed.	‘ <a href="#">Closing of 2KY</a> ’, <i>The Mercury</i> (Hobart), 23 December 1938, p. 6 and ‘ <a href="#">Views of 2KY commentator</a> ’, <i>Worker</i> (Brisbane), 27 December 1938, p. 1 and Griffen-Foley, <i>Changing stations</i> , op. cit., pp. 362–63.

### Box 3: Hammond Royal Commission: if it ain’t broke don’t fix it

In 1927, the Hammond Royal Commission commented after a nine-month investigation into all aspects of wireless:

‘Having given the matter exhaustive consideration the commission has come to the conclusion that very little change in the existing system is advisable at the present time.’

With regards to the future of wireless, the Commission added:

‘Various schemes for the future control of broadcasting have been suggested to the Commission. [One of these is] direct control of broadcasting stations by the Government ... In our opinion such a scheme is inadvisable as experience already shows that when Governments are placed in charge of the means of disseminating news, they are apt to use such means for the purposes of political propaganda.’<sup>53</sup>

### 1939–1949: censorship, the Broadcasting Act, licences and a regulator

Throughout World war 11, both the press and broadcasters were subject to considerable government censorship. This imposition caused great angst. Commercial broadcasters were particularly aggrieved, objecting to what they considered was an unnecessarily overriding authority invested in the Postmaster-General’s Department. They were also concerned about what they saw as excessive legislative power wielded over the media by government ministers.

During the war, a new Act to regulate broadcasting was introduced—the *Australian Broadcasting Act 1942* (the *Broadcasting Act*). This Act gave the Government power to regulate commercial broadcasting and to cover the national services delivered by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (the ABC). The ABC had evolved from the Class A stations established under the open radio system in the 1920s. The *Broadcasting Act* gave ministers for communications power to grant and renew commercial broadcasting licences. It also introduced requirements with which broadcasters had to comply, such as programming standards and Australian content quotas.

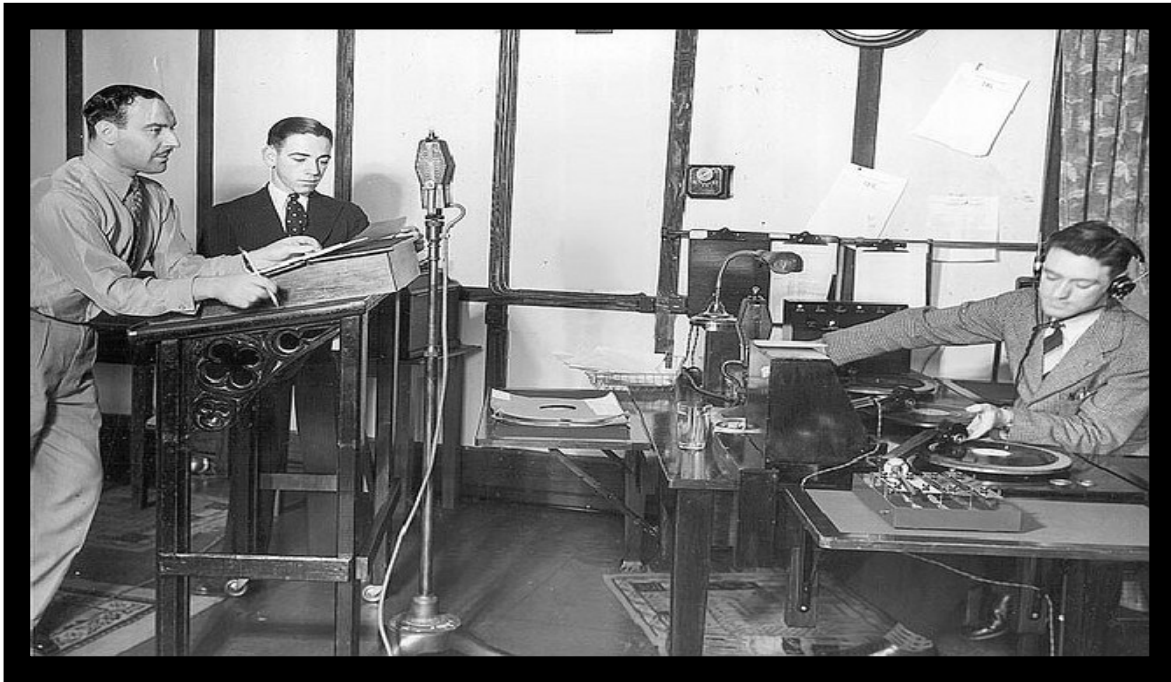
After a number of claims were made of ministerial political patronage in granting licences, broadcasters called for the establishment of an independent regulatory authority to limit the potential for government interference

53. Royal Commission on Wireless, [Report of the Royal Commission on Wireless](#), (Hammond Commission), HJ Green, Government Printer for the State of Victoria, Melbourne, 1927, pp. vi and 4.

in the allocation of licensing and programming decisions. In 1948, the *Broadcasting Act* was amended to establish a regulatory body, the Australian Broadcasting Control Board (ABCB), which was charged with ensuring that broadcasting services were developed and operated in the public interest.

From the 1930s to the 1950s, despite regulatory attempts calculated to slow media concentration, companies such as the Herald and Weekly Times, Fairfax and Frank Packer’s Consolidated Press manoeuvred to buy and sell assets and to outwit each other in taking greater control of various media in the process.

**Figure 3: early ABC broadcasting**



Source: ABC archives<sup>54</sup>

Milestones	Details	Document source
<b>1939–45</b>		
April 1939	Joseph Lyons dies in office. Earle Page serves as caretaker Prime Minister until the UAP elects Robert Menzies as leader on 26 April 1939	
August 1939	National security regulations are introduced. These include regulations to control radio and cable services. The Department of Information controls news and information.	<a href="#">‘National security: the new regulations’</a> , <i>The West Australian</i> , 26 August 1939, p. 18 and Zwar, op. cit., p. 93.
September 1939	World War II begins when Britain and France declare war on Germany following its invasion of Poland.	
September 1939	After commentary on the ABC by ‘The Watchman’, which criticises the British policy response to the invasion of Poland by Germany, the Government directs the broadcaster to ensure its programs contain only factual observations.	‘At home and abroad’, 21 September 1939 and telephone conversation reported in memorandum from

54. Picture shows an October 1937 synthetic broadcast of the First Rugby Test from Leeds, United Kingdom, at the ABC’s 2BL Studios. Within ten minutes of the actual happening in England, the particular phase of play outlined in the cable is described by the Commission’s Sporting Editor (Bill Phillips) left, aided by sound effects controlled by Jack Butler. [ABC archives](#), accessed 16 March 2015.

Milestones	Details	Document source
		W Cleary, ABC Chairman, to all Commissioners and the General Manager, 21 September 1939, as quoted in A Thomas, 'Political pressure in the ABC', in Moran, op. cit., p. 70.
November 1939	Frank Packer and EG Theodore launch the <i>Sunday Telegraph</i> in opposition to Denison's <i>Sunday Sun</i> and Norton's <i>Truth</i> .	Whittington, op. cit., p. 146.
December 1939	Radio Australia (known as Australia Calling until 1945), commences short-wave broadcasting in English, French, Dutch and Spanish.	Carty, op. cit., p. 3.
1940	Twenty-six national and 100 commercial radio licences in operation.	ABCB, <i>First Annual Report</i> , op. cit., p. 5.
June 1940	To prevent Era Norton from buying the Sydney Labor paper <i>Daily News</i> and converting it to an evening paper, Consolidated Press buys it and incorporates it into the <i>Daily Telegraph</i> .	Whittington, op. cit., p. 151.
June 1940	Keith Murdoch is appointed Director General of Information by Prime Minister Menzies. Murdoch is criticised by his peers for supporting proposed media regulation which they see as a dangerous attack on the press. Murdoch resigns his position after four months.	Chadwick, op. cit., p. xxiv and Roberts, op. cit., pp. 227–9.
September 1940	Coalition at first retains power after the September 1940 election with the support of two independents, but by October, the independents withdraw their backing and Labor's John Curtin becomes Prime Minister. <sup>55</sup>	
January 1941	Four broadcasting licences—2HD (Newcastle), 4AT (Atherton), 5AK (Adelaide) and 5AU (Port Augusta)—are withdrawn under national security regulations because of their supposed association with the Jehovah's Witnesses religious group which has been declared illegal under the same regulations.	' <a href="#">Radio stations closed: federal order to four</a> ', <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 9 January 1941, p. 7 and ' <a href="#">Banned radio station: licences lost</a> ', <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 8 February 1941, p. 17.
February 1941	Under conditions in the <i>National Security Act</i> passed in 1939, controls are imposed on newspaper production and importation of newsprint. This reduces the amount of paper allowed for production by 35 per cent. Newsprint rationing comes into effect 1 July 1941. <sup>56</sup>	<a href="#">National Security Act 1939</a> and B Griffen-Foley, <i>Sir Frank Packer: the young master: a biography</i> , Harper Collins, Sydney, 2000, p. 118.
May 1941	The Government agrees in principle to grant a newsprint licence to begin publication of a new paper, the <i>Daily Mirror</i> . It reverses this decision, but later changes its mind and the <i>Daily Mirror</i> commences as a Sydney afternoon newspaper, despite the wartime newsprint restrictions imposed on existing publications. Frank Packer resigns Chairmanship of Australian Newspapers Conference	Australian Newspaper History Group (ANHG), <i>Newsletter</i> , 15, November 2001, p. 20, <a href="#">Ezra Norton</a> , <i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entry and Whittington, op. cit., pp. 150–1.

55. Curtin died in office 5 July 1945 and Joseph (Ben) Chifley was sworn in as Prime Minister 13 July.

56. Australian Newsprint Mills in Tasmania began producing newsprint in February 1941.

Milestones	Details	Document source
	in protest.	
December 1941	Four radio stations ordered to close after they broadcast information concerning the presumed sinking of HMAS Sydney. <sup>57</sup>	<a href="#">‘Ban on radio stations’</a> , <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 2 December 1941, p. 6.
March 1942	<p>Report of the Joint Committee on Wireless Broadcasting (the Gibson Committee) is published.</p> <p>The Committee notes that while the powers of regulation for commercial broadcasting given to the Postmaster-General are considerable, they are also inappropriate in dealing with minor offences—powers were only to revoke a licence or to caution a broadcaster. It recommends that new legislation is introduced to regulate commercial broadcasting.</p> <p>Other matters raised by the Committee include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- concern that misuse of the power and influence of radio broadcasting should not corrode the fabric of the nation and</li> <li>- concern there is little ownership of broadcasting licences outside the newspaper world—directly or indirectly newspapers own or control 44 per cent of commercial stations.</li> </ul> <p>The report also looks at the development of networks of stations and recommends that a Parliamentary Committee on Broadcasting monitors these to ensure that a monopolistic situation does not develop.</p>	Joint Committee on Wireless Broadcasting, <i>Report of the Joint Committee on Wireless Broadcasting</i> , (Gibson Committee), LF Johnson, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1942.
April 1942	<p>All imports of newsprint suspended so shipping space can be devoted to war time goods.</p> <p>Rationing is relaxed in October 1943.</p> <p>Newsprint rationing gives broadcasting a financial boost as advertisers turn from print to radio.</p>	<a href="#">‘Newsprint import inquiry sought’</a> , <i>The Courier Mail</i> , 5 November 1942, p. 2 and <a href="#">‘Increased issue of newsprint’</a> , <i>The Argus</i> , 30 September 1943, p. 2 and Carty, op. cit., p. 6.
May 1942	Keith Murdoch becomes Chairman of HWT.	‘Sir Keith Murdoch Herald Chairman’, <a href="#">News</a> (Adelaide), 1 May 1942, p. 5.
June 1942	<p>Passage of the <i>Australian Broadcasting Act 1942</i> (the Broadcasting Act).</p> <p>Regulation of commercial stations is transferred from the <i>WT Act</i> and the <i>Australian Broadcasting Commission Act</i> is repealed so that the <i>Broadcasting Act</i> covers both commercial and national services.</p> <p>Program standards are required under section 60(1) of the <i>Broadcasting Act</i> so that commercial licensees provide programs that are ‘to the satisfaction’ of the Minister.</p> <p>The Minister is given the power to grant, renew and otherwise make decisions with regards to licensing.</p>	<a href="#">‘Australian Broadcasting Act 1942’</a> and <a href="#">‘Australian Broadcasting Act: important changes’</a> , <i>Westralian Worker</i> , 26 June 1942, p. 2.

57. The HMAS *Sydney* was sunk on 19 November 1941 after a battle with the German raider *Kormoran*. The Prime Minister confirmed the sinking on 1 December.

Milestones	Details	Document source
	<p>Section 88(2) requires that at least 2½ per cent of music broadcast on any stations is devoted to broadcasting the works of Australian composers.</p> <p>Section 114 requires broadcasters to use Australians in the production of programs ‘as far as possible’.</p> <p>The <i>Broadcasting Act</i> requires the complete blackout of electoral broadcasting 72 hours before an election.</p> <p>Sections 100 and 122 of the <i>Broadcasting Act</i> require that advertisements relating to medicine cannot be broadcast unless approved by the Director-General of Health or the Minister responsible for broadcasting.</p>	
June 1942	<p><i>Commercial Broadcasting Stations Licence Fees Act</i> is passed. Licences granted to commercial broadcasters on conditions determined by the relevant minister. Licences are £25 per annum plus one half of one per cent of gross earnings of any stations which in the preceding year had made a profit.</p>	<p><a href="#">Commercial Broadcasting Stations Licence Fees Act 1942</a></p>
1942	<p>Walter Grant becomes a major shareholder of Western Broadcasters owner of 2DU (Dubbo)—the company is later to become Grant Broadcasters.</p>	<p>B Griffen-Foley, ‘Grant Family’, in Griffen-Foley, ed., op. cit., p. 196.</p>
March 1943	<p>The first report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting, established by the <i>Broadcasting Act</i>, is delivered. Committee suggests that widening its terms of reference is advisable. Accusations made in the media that the committee is seeking control over broadcasting and that it wants to usurp policy functions previously undertaken by the ABC.</p>	<p>‘<a href="#">Broadcasting dangers</a>’, <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>, 6 April 1943, p. 6.</p>
July 1943	<p>Second report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting recommends that there should be ministerial control over arrangements which involve broadcasting stations organising into networks. The Committee believes such control would help ensure networking does not lead to monopoly control of commercial broadcasting.</p>	<p>ABC, <i>Second Annual Report</i>, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1949, p. 6.</p>
August 1943	<p>Labor retains government at the federal poll.</p>	
November 1943	<p>Following a number of censorship breaches, Frank Packer’s <i>Telegraph</i> is ordered by the government censor to submit all copy for approval before publication. An undertaking given by the paper to observe censorship ‘on certain conditions’ leads to the order being revoked. The paper continues to be involved in censorship controversy during the war years.</p>	<p>B Griffen-Foley, <i>Sir Frank Packer</i>, op. cit., pp. 147–8.</p>

Milestones	Details	Document source
April–October 1944	<p>Dispute erupts between the government censor, (supported by the Information Minister, Arthur Calwell), and Sydney newspaper proprietors over wartime censorship.</p> <p>The papers accuse the Government of trying to ‘out Goebbel Goebbels’ by censoring reports which it assesses as dangerous to public morale. The papers defy the censor by printing material they are ordered not to publish.</p> <p>During Sydney newspaper printers’ strike (over the 40-hour week campaign) publishers produce a composite newspaper. Minister Calwell suggests the composite paper is unlicensed.</p> <p>Federal police stop deliveries and the High Court grants an injunction, after which discussions between the Government and the papers result in a compromise whereby only matters of defence security are subject to censorship.</p>	<p>Souter, <i>Company of Heralds</i>, op. cit., p. 238 and various reports including: <a href="#">‘Mr Calwell runs true to form’</a>, <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>, 12 October 1944, p. 2.</p>
November 1944	<p>The Government asks the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting to report on the manner in which, and to what extent, television should be incorporated into Australia’s broadcasting system.</p>	<p>Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting, <i>Twelfth report: relating to Frequency Modulation broadcasting, television broadcasting and facsimile broadcasting</i>, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1946, p. 4.</p>
1944	<p>Anderson Analysis of Broadcasting and McNair Survey companies begin audience surveys.</p>	<p>I MacKay, <i>Broadcasting in Australia</i>, op. cit., p. 171.</p>
<b>1945–1950</b>		
<p>May and August 1945</p> <p>World War II ends in Europe (May) and the Pacific (August).</p>		
October 1945	<p>Postmaster-Generals’ meeting adopts general principles for broadcast of children’s programs.</p>	<p><a href="#">‘Children’s radio’</a>, <i>The West Australian</i>, 9 October 1945, p. 4.</p>
July 1946	<p>The <i>Broadcasting Act</i> is amended to require that the ABC record and broadcast parliamentary proceedings.</p>	<p><a href="#">Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act 1946</a></p>
August 1946	<p>The <i>Broadcasting Act</i> is amended to provide for regulation controlling the operation of broadcasting networks and requiring commercial broadcasters to obtain permission from the Postmaster-General before acquiring shares in a network company or entering into an agreement with a network company for sharing programs or advertisements.</p>	<p><a href="#">Australian Broadcasting Act 1946</a></p>
<p>September 1946</p> <p>Joseph (Ben) Chifley leads Labor to a comfortable victory at the 1946 election.</p>		

Milestones	Details	Document source
1946	Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters (FARB) publishes a broadcasting practice standard.	Griffen-Foley, <i>Changing stations</i> , op. cit., reference to FARB meeting with ABCB, p. 44.
1947	Government decides that no action should be taken to introduce television services.	A Curthoys, 'The getting of television', in A Curthoys and J Merritt, eds, <i>Better dead than red: Australia's first Cold War 1945–1959</i> , Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1986, p. 126.
June 1947	ABC begins an independent news service.	A Barker, <i>What happened when: a chronology of Australia from 1788</i> , fourth edn, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 2000, p. 265.
August 1947	Newspaper proprietors warn the Government that its policy of continued rationing of newsprint is likely to lead to widespread job losses in the industry.	Griffen-Foley, <i>Sir Frank Packer</i> , op. cit., p. 169.
September 1948	<p>Australian Broadcasting Control Board (ABCB) is established by an amendment to the <i>Broadcasting Act</i>. The ABCB is to ensure that broadcasting services are developed and operated with regards to the public interest.</p> <p>In so doing, the ABCB is given directions to ensure a reasonable variety of programs are broadcast, religious programs are broadcast 'for adequate periods' and the broadcast of political or controversial matter is on an equitable basis. It is also given power to regulate advertising and the hours of service of broadcasting stations.</p> <p>Commercial broadcasting stations are restricted to using Amplitude Modulation (AM) for broadcasting.<sup>58</sup></p> <p>(ABCB commences operations in March 1949).</p>	<a href="#">Australian Broadcasting Act 1948</a>
November 1948	Packer and Theodore convert Consolidated Press to a public company and acquire all Associated Newspapers' shares.	<a href="#">"Telegraph" public company plan</a> , <i>Cessnock Eagle and South Maitland Recorder</i> , 12 November 1948, p. 7.
1948	Experimental Frequency Modulation (FM) radio stations set up and allowed to operate, but Government prevents receivers being sold to the general public. Reports that the Government favours FM to be broadcast only by the ABC. <sup>59</sup>	P Marcato, 'FM radio', in Griffen-Foley, ed., op. cit., p. 174 and <a href="#">The government looks at radio</a> , <i>News</i> (Adelaide), 5 May 1948, p. 2.
March 1949	Subject to certain conditions the ABCB allows advertisements to be broadcast on Sundays.	ABCB, <i>Fourth Annual Report</i> , Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1949, p. 23.

58. Amplitude modulation (AM) is the method of combining radio carrier waves and electric waves so that the amplitude of the carrier waves varies to match the change in the electric waves. The AM band of the electromagnetic spectrum is between 535 KHz and 1705 KHz.

59. Frequency modulation (FM) conveys information over a carrier wave by varying its frequency rather than amplitude.

Milestones	Details	Document source
June 1949	ABCB reports to the Government that television services should be established in the six capital cities as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made. The Board proposes to impose transmission and program standards.	ABCB, <i>First Annual Report</i> , Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1949, p. 9.
June 1949	British Mirror Group buys the Melbourne <i>Argus</i> .	Chadwick, op. cit., p. xxvi and ' <a href="#">New "Argus" control</a> ', <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 28 June 1949, p. 3.
December 1949	The 1949 election sees Robert Menzies lead the Liberal Party, in close cooperation with the Country Party, to victory.	
1949	Sir Keith Murdoch buys HWT shares in the <i>Adelaide News</i> and offers first option on his shares in Brisbane's <i>Courier-Mail</i> to HWT.	Chadwick, op. cit., p. xxvi.

## 1950–1956: British interests, Murdoch junior, the Paton Commission and first television licences issued

In the late 1920s Australian Governments first began to contemplate if, and when, television would become a reality for Australians. There were many issues for the Government to consider, not least of which was the cost of establishing and providing services to a small and scattered population. Supporters of the new type of broadcasting argued for early adoption, but for over 20 years the government appeared convinced that television was not a commercially viable proposition for Australia.

On the other hand, the Gibson parliamentary inquiry into broadcasting in the early 1940s concluded that while there was much work to be done, introducing television to Australia would be feasible.<sup>60</sup> Later in the same decade, a Joint Standing Committee on Broadcasting recommended that an experimental television service should be established in Sydney and Melbourne as soon as possible and that the service should be overseen by the ABC.<sup>61</sup> In 1949, the Chifley Labor Government formally announced its intention to carry out this recommendation—a decision that was not well received by the existing commercial media interests.

### Box 4: Gibson Committee—an oblique reference to media concentration

The Gibson Committee inquiry report into wireless broadcasting commented on media concentration in its 1942 report:

'...there is little multiple ownership of broadcasting licences outside the newspaper world. Directly, and indirectly through persons associated with the work of daily newspapers, newspapers own or control 44 per cent of commercial stations. In the case of some papers a very small interest is held in one station only. In that of others, particularly those started in recent years, there is no interest in any station at all.

It is clear to us that the desire on the part of newspaper interests to acquire licences in the early days of broadcasting was inspired by a fear of this new medium for the dissemination of information and advertising. It was a defensive move by those who felt their pre-eminence could be challenged at some remote or proximate date, not then ascertainable. The acquisition of licences was governed principally by the acumen and perspicacity of individual newspaper proprietors; it was in effect, a case of the early bird catching the worm.

The passage of time has not justified all the fears of the controllers of the daily press and the evidence submitted convinces us that the universal popularity of wireless throughout Australia has not led to any diminution in the sales of newspapers, nor to any reduction in their profits, excepting perhaps in a few minor instances. On the

60. Joint Committee on Wireless Broadcasting (Gibson Committee), *Report of the Joint Committee on Wireless Broadcasting*, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1942, p. 70.

61. A Curthoys, 'The getting of television', in A Curthoys and J Merritt, eds, *Better dead than red: Australia's first Cold War 1945–1959*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1986, p. 26.

other hand, the operation of broadcasting licences has not only made profits, generally speaking, for the shareholders in newspaper companies but has strengthened their position considerably'.<sup>62</sup>

The Opposition was opposed to the Chifley plan. Therefore, once it gained office under Robert Menzies, the Coalition Government began implementing a plan for television that mirrored the dual system of commercial and public broadcasting which existed for radio. In 1953, a Royal Commission was established to make recommendations to government on how the system for television could develop, how many stations should be licensed and what conditions and standards should be imposed on licensees. However, a month after the Commission began its deliberations, the Parliament passed legislation which ushered in the television era. According to the Postmaster-General, while there was to be a joint system of national and commercial stations, there was a clear expectation that commercial television was not merely a business; it was a public trust to be run for the benefit of the community.<sup>63</sup>

Six months later at 7pm on 16 September 1956, Bruce Gyngell, program manager for television station TCN Sydney, welcomed viewers to the first regular transmission of television programs. In an environment where only 70 per cent of homes had a refrigerator and 39 per cent owned a washing machine, it is clear that purchasing a television was going to be a major decision for families and it was predicted that only ten per cent of homes would have television after one year of its release.<sup>64</sup> This prediction proved to be conservative; 26 per cent of homes in Melbourne, for example, purchased a television in the first year after transmissions commenced.<sup>65</sup> By 1976, saturation of television had reached 95 per cent in most parts of Australia.<sup>66</sup>

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62. Gibson Committee, op. cit.

63. C Davidson, '[Second reading speech: Broadcasting and Television Bill 1956](#)', House of Representatives, *Debates*, 19 April 1956, p. 1536, accessed 13 March 2015.

64. H Hughes and M Joseph, *The market for television in Australia*, ANZ Bank, 1956, quoted in C Jones and D Bednall, *Television in Australia: its history through ratings*, Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (ABT), January 1980, p. 4.

65. No doubt the staging of the Olympic Games in Melbourne in 1956 contributed to this figure.

66. Hughes and Joseph, *The market for television*, op. cit.

Figure 4: Bruce Gyngall: welcome to television



Source: Google Images<sup>67</sup>

Milestones	Details	Document source
<b>1950–1953</b>		
January 1950	The Menzies Coalition Government investigates the possibility of establishing a dual system for television broadcasting.	<a href="#">‘Television proposal; may be open to commercials’</a> , <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 17 January 1950, p. 3.
May 1950	Radio Australia becomes part of the ABC.	<a href="#">‘Activities of Radio Australia: no policy change’</a> , <i>The West Australian</i> , 1 June 1950, p. 4.
June 1950	The Government decides that private enterprise will be allowed to provide television services alongside national television services.  These services are to be allowed to broadcast initially in Sydney and Melbourne.  Private services may be extended to other capital cities if the Government considers the capacity of applicants justifies services being provided.	ABC, <i>Second Annual Report</i> , op. cit., p. 14.
June 1950	The number of commercial broadcasting licenses in force reaches 102 and there are 37 national stations in operation.  Newspaper companies own 19 of the 102 commercial stations and	ABC, <i>Second Annual Report</i> , op. cit., p. 6.

67. [‘Bruce Gyngall’](#), Google Images, accessed 12 March 2015.

Milestones	Details	Document source
	hold shares in 25 others. Two broadcasting networks are in existence, the Macquarie Broadcasting Network and the Major Network.	
April 1951	The Menzies Government returned at the polls.	
1951	Sixteen capital city daily newspapers published. Twelve independent operators.	Goot, <i>Newspaper circulation in Australia</i> , op. cit., p. 213.
August 1951	Fairfax launches the weekly newspaper the <i>Australian Financial Review</i> (becomes a daily in 1963).	<i>Macquarie encyclopedia</i> , op. cit., p. 522.
November 1951	An attempt by British interests (through Broadcasting Associates Pty Ltd) to take control of a number of Australian radio stations leads to a joint resolution of both Houses of Parliament that it is 'undesirable' for any non-Australian person to have a 'substantial measure of ownership or control' over an Australian commercial broadcasting station, regardless of whether that ownership or control is direct or indirect.	ABCB, <i>Fourth Annual Report</i> , Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1952 and <i>Fifth Annual Report</i> , Australian Government Printer, Canberra, 1953, pp. 8–9.
1951	Government sells its interest in AWA.	ABCB, <i>Fourth Annual Report</i> , op. cit., p. 8.
August 1952	John Fairfax sells its interest in <i>Woman's Day and Home</i> to HWT.	Souter, op. cit., p. 597.
October 1952	Death of Keith Murdoch.	' <a href="#">Death of Sir Keith Murdoch</a> ', <i>The Courier Mail</i> , 6 October 1952, p. 1.
<b>1953–1956</b>		
February 1953	A Royal Commission on Television (the Paton Commission) is established.	Royal Commission on Television, (the Paton Commission), <i>Report of the Royal Commission on Television</i> , LF Johnson, Commonwealth Government Printer, 1954.
March 1953	Legislation passes the Parliament to authorise the relevant Minister to grant commercial television licences under the form and conditions as he/she determines.  The <i>Television Act</i> also provides authority for the ABC to broadcast television.	<a href="#">Television Act 1953</a>
June 1953	Newspaper companies own 18 of the 105 commercial broadcasting stations operating in June 1953 and have shares in 30 other stations.	ABCB, <i>Fifth Annual Report</i> , op. cit., p. 9.
July 1953	Frank Packer makes an offer to buy the ordinary shares in Hugh Denison's Associated Newspapers.	Griffen-Foley, <i>Changing stations</i> , op. cit., pp. 195–7.
August 1953	In response to Packer's bid for Associated Newspapers, the Fairfax company acquires a 39 per cent interest in that company (which also controls radio 2UE in Sydney).	<i>Ibid.</i> , p. 196.

Milestones	Details	Document source
September 1953	<p>Rupert Murdoch returns to Australia from Britain to take over the media interests left to him by his father Keith Murdoch through the News Ltd company.</p> <p>Papers owned by Murdoch initially are the <i>Adelaide News</i>, <i>Sunday Mail</i>, <i>Radio Call</i> and the Broken Hill paper, the <i>Barrier Miner</i>. The company also owns shares in radio stations in Broken Hill, Renmark and Adelaide.</p> <p>The Murdoch family sells shares in the <i>Courier Mail</i> to HWT.</p>	R Tiffen, <i>Rupert Murdoch: a reassessment</i> , New South Publishing, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2014, Chapter 2.
November 1953	<p>As a result of sale of Murdoch interests, HWT acquires a controlling interest in Queensland Newspapers and the licences of a number of Queensland radio stations.</p> <p>Other media holdings of the company are two radio stations in Victoria and shares in Advertiser Newspapers, which in turns controls four stations in South Australia.</p>	' <a href="#">Melbourne paper share deal</a> ', <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 10 November 1953, p. 6.
1953	<p>ABCB reviews rules relating to the broadcast of sporting events, lotteries and telephone conversations (these put in place by the Postmaster-General prior to the setting up of the Board).</p> <p>New rules include that information concerning betting or betting odds for horse race events is not broadcast prior to the last event on a program, lotteries information is broadcast according to state legislation requirements and telephone conversations are broadcast only with the permission of the Post Office.</p>	ABCB, <i>Fifth Annual Report</i> , op. cit., p. 9.
May 1954	The Menzies Liberal / Country Party Coalition Government returned at the 1954 election. <sup>68</sup>	
September 1954	<p>Report of the Paton Commission on television released. The Commission recommends establishing one national station and two commercial licenses in Sydney and Melbourne.</p> <p>Report concludes that concentration of control could be regarded as contrary to the public interest and that regulation is needed to ensure programming of a high standard is broadcast.</p> <p>Recommends a new section is inserted in the <i>Broadcasting Act</i> to require programs comply with standards set by the ABCB.</p> <p>The Commission believes the licensing process could ensure the public interest is served.</p>	Paton Commission, op. cit.
September 1954	The ABCB responds to requests from Australian Federation of Commercial Broadcasting Stations and Australian Association of National Advertisers by increasing the amount of time allowed for advertising in programs.	ABCB, <i>Sixth Annual Report</i> , Government Printing Office, Canberra, 1954, p. 23.
January 1955	<p>The ABCB conducts public hearings into the granting of television licenses. Four applications are received for two Melbourne licenses, and eight for two Sydney licences.</p> <p>Applications come from a narrow area of press, broadcasting and theatre interests.</p>	ABCB, <i>Seventh Annual Report</i> , Government Printer, Tasmania, 1955, pp. 26–34.

68. Note this election was for the House of Representatives only; a half Senate election was held in May 1953.

Milestones	Details	Document source
1955	<p>The ABCB recommends that all four licenses are given to the applications with substantial press and broadcasting interests (Fairfax through the Amalgamated Television Services bid and Consolidated Press through Television Corporation in Sydney, and David Syme and HWT in Melbourne).</p> <p>The Minister approves the ABCB recommendations.</p> <p>Any foreign ownership involvement in a licence is limited to 20 per cent.</p> <p>The <i>Argus</i> newspaper sold to HWT by London's Mirror Newspapers.</p>	R Murray and J Usher, 'Argus', in Griffen-Foley, ed., op. cit., p. 25.
December 1955	Coalition retains government under Prime Minister Menzies.	
April 1956	Fairfax becomes a public company consisting of a holding company and various subsidiary companies, including Associated Newspapers and Amalgamated Television.	Souter, op. cit., p. 598.
April 1956	Government notes that possessing a commercial television licence imposes a public trust obligation on commercial television services.	C Davidson, ' <a href="#">Second reading speech: Broadcasting and Television Bill 1956</a> ', House of Representatives, <i>Debates</i> , 19 April 1956, pp. 1531–42.
June 1956	<p>The <i>Broadcasting Act</i> is amended to extend the dual radio regulatory system of commercial and public service broadcasting to television. It also provides for a public inquiry into licensing.</p> <p>The Minister is required to obtain a recommendation from the ABCB before granting a radio or television broadcasting licence. The Minister can, however, suspend or revoke a licence on the ground (among others) that it is in the public interest to do so.</p> <p>Ownership of metropolitan television stations is limited to one; no more than two stations are to be owned nationally (section 53A).</p> <p>Program standards are to be determined by the ABCB.</p> <p>Five per cent of music broadcasts are to feature Australian works.</p> <p>Television licence fees for the public are set at £5.</p>	<a href="#">Broadcasting and Television Act 1956</a>
June 1956	<i>Broadcasting and Television Licence Fees Act</i> is passed. Licensees to pay £25, regardless of whether stations had made a profit, plus one per cent of the gross earnings of stations.	<a href="#">Broadcasting and Television Licence Fees Act 1956</a>
November 1956	ACCB establishes a Children's Advisory Committee to consider appropriate television content that could be broadcast for children on commercial stations.	ACCB, <i>Ninth Annual Report</i> , Government Printer, Tasmania, 1957, p. 41.

Milestones	Details	Document source
September–December 1956	<p>The first free-to-air television services commence in Sydney and Melbourne.</p> <p>Fairfax is the major shareholder in ATN 7 Sydney; Consolidated Press the major shareholder in TCN 9 in Sydney.<sup>69</sup></p> <p>David Syme is a major shareholder in GTV 9 Melbourne and HTV holds major shares in Herald Sun Television (HSV 7) Melbourne.<sup>70</sup></p> <p>The ABC begins television broadcasting in November.</p>	<p>ABC, <i>Ninth Annual Report</i>, op. cit., pp. 27–31 and KS Inglis, <i>This is the ABC: the Australian Broadcasting Commission 1932–1983</i>, Black, Melbourne, 2006, p. 198.</p>

### Box 5: the Paton commission on television: regulation tempered by agreement

The Paton Commission on television supported a cooperative regulatory system for commercial television—a system it considered would best serve the public interest:

‘We have been impressed by the evidence of close consultation between the Australian Federation of Commercial Broadcasting Stations and the Australian Broadcasting Control Board on all aspects of broadcasting administration and, in particular, with respect to the formulation of standards relating to programmes. While it is of course, impossible to expect that on all matters the Board and the Federation will be in agreement, we have been informed that, in all cases in which specific determinations have been made by the Board relating to programmes of commercial broadcasting stations there has been not only consultation, but agreement, between the Board and the Federation.

Failing agreement, it is clearly essential that there should be a reserve of authority (which we suggest will most effectively be exercised through the licensing system) which will be designed to secure that commercial programmes will, in the broadest sense, serve the public interest. We feel, therefore, that, on the whole, the extension to commercial television stations of the existing practices with respect to the regulation of programmes of commercial broadcasting stations affords the most effective method of securing, not only that undesirable programmes should not be broadcast, but that programmes of really good quality should be available from commercial television stations.

It will, of course, be necessary to have some legislative provision, along the lines of the present provision of the Broadcasting Act relating to the programmes of commercial broadcasting stations, to secure that prompt measures may be taken (apart from regular reviews of station performances in the ordinary course of the administration of the licensing system) to prevent objectionable material from being transmitted’.<sup>71</sup>

### 1957–1971: new stations, ownership concentrates, Australian content and FM deferred

After television commenced in Sydney and Melbourne, the Government decided to implement a staged approach to the expansion of commercial services to other areas. Following recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Television in 1954, this approach initially involved the granting of licences in other capital cities. During 1959, Brisbane and Adelaide were awarded two licences each and in 1960 one licence was granted

69. Other shareholders include the Albert family who own a network of radio stations.

70. Other major shareholders in Television Corporation were foreign owned: (British) Associated Newspapers (20 per cent) and Phillips Electrical (ten per cent). The other major shareholder groups in Amalgamated Television consisted of AWA and the appliance manufacturer, Email. The British company Associate Newspapers also had shares in Herald Sun Television in Melbourne. Other major shareholders in GTV 9 were Electronic Industries (manufacturers of radio and television receivers), the *Argus* and *Australasian* newspapers and radio 3UZ. N Herd, *Networking: commercial television in Australia: a history*, Currency House, Strawberry Hills, NSW, 2012, pp. 42–46.

71. Royal Commission on Television, *Report of the Royal Commission on Television*, (Paton Commission), LF Johnson, Commonwealth Government Printer, 1954, p. 152.

in Perth and one in Hobart. Despite some concern about concentration, expressed by at least one government member, these licences were all bestowed on established media interests.<sup>72</sup>

Stage three of the expansion process, which extended services to large provincial centres, took place between 1962 and 1964. This involved establishing stations in Canberra and major provincial centres, such as Newcastle, Wollongong, Ballarat, Rockhampton and Townsville.<sup>73</sup> Stage four delivered services to smaller regional centres in the period between 1965 and 1968. There was some question whether the smaller regional markets could support commercial stations. But, as Nick Herd observes in his history of commercial television in Australia, the locally owned stations in these areas became profitable (at least until the 1980s when legislative and policy changes, such as the Hawke Government's equalisation policy, intervened to change the dynamics of regional television).<sup>74</sup> The final stage of the introduction of television involved the licensing of additional services in the capital cities.

While localism appeared to be an important component of the Government's television policy, it was not a priority for many commercial broadcasters who 'sought to establish a system of control over stations and programming that centred on Sydney and Melbourne'.<sup>75</sup>

Increasing media concentration through 'cross media ownership' became more of an issue as television expanded across the country. Cross media ownership effectively meant that the newspaper owners who had purchased radio stations, or who held substantial shares in stations from the 1920s onwards, seized the opportunity in the 1950s and 1960s to add various television assets to their portfolios. Despite the existence of regulations that had been clearly framed to promote diversity and the passage of more legislation that appeared to have a similar intent, government decisions at times contributed to concentration—for example, decisions to award television licences in Adelaide and Perth to companies with existing media interests.

One important result of what became a general trend towards increased media concentration at this time, as Henry Mayer pointed out in an assessment of the Australian newspaper industry in 1964, was that one company, the Herald and Weekly Times, controlled 43 per cent of daily newspaper circulation in Australia in 1960.<sup>76</sup> By the early 1970s it appeared that this situation had worsened when an international assessment claimed Australia had a disturbingly high concentration of press media ownership.<sup>77</sup>

#### **Box 6: 1971: a journalist's comment on the print media environment**

In November 1971 the *Age* published concerns about media concentration provided by a representative of the Journalists' Association:

'We see great danger in fostering a trend towards monopoly ... it constitutes a threat to the full interplay of opinion and criticism which is the basis of a virile democracy.

Reduce the number of newspapers with a corresponding growth of monopolist control and you reduce the extent of news coverage and the expressions of opinion.

We realise that with newspapers in the hands of a comparative few these people are in a greatly advantageous position to influence the thinking of the people.'<sup>78</sup>

72. H Holt, '[Speech: Estimates 1958–59: part 2: business undertakings: proposed vote, £98,067,000](#)', House of Representatives, *Debates*, 11 September 1958, pp. 1195–97.

73. Herd, *Networking: commercial television in Australia*, op. cit., pp. 56–81.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

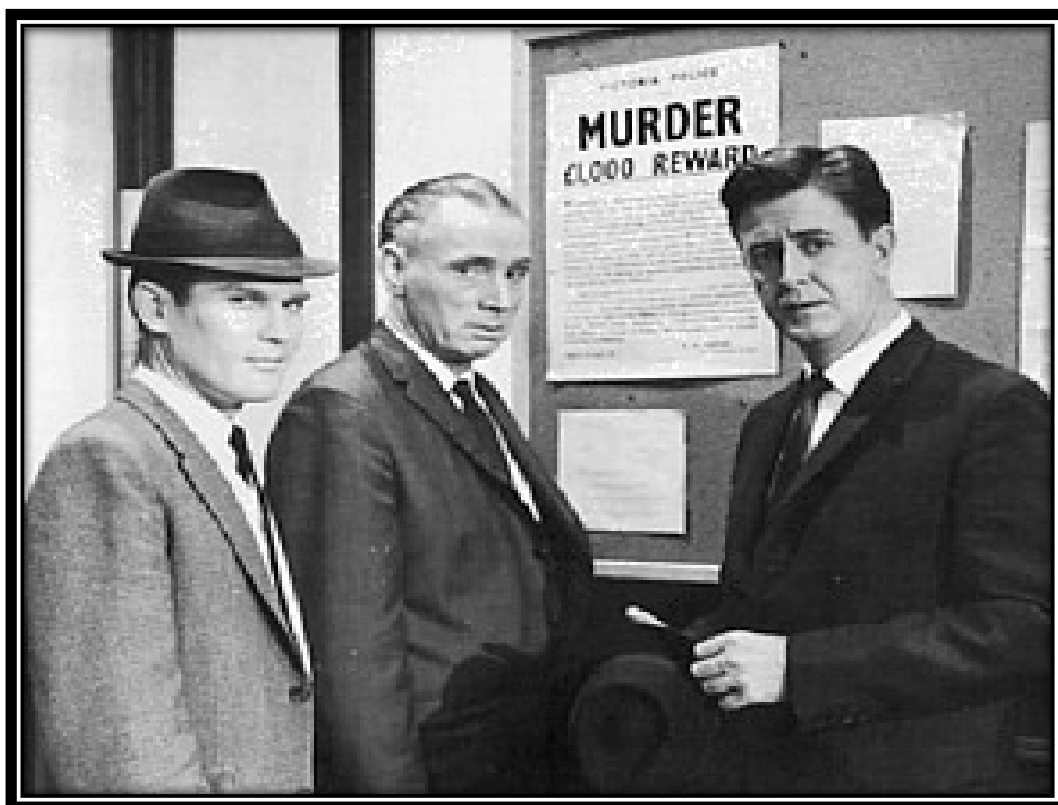
75. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

76. Mayer, op. cit., p. 31.

77. RB Nixon and T Hahn, 'Concentration of press ownership: a comparison of 32 countries', *Journalism Quarterly*, 48(1). 1973, cited in H McQueen, *Australia's media monopolies*, Widescope International, Camberwell, Vic., 1977, p. 35.

78. Australian Journalist Association official quoted in the *Age*, 3 November 1971, p. 4 and cited by H McQueen, *Australia's media monopolies*, op. cit., 1977, p. 36.

Figure 5: Australian content 1964: 'homegrown' detectives on *Homicide*



Source: Classic Australian Television<sup>79</sup>

Milestone	Details	Document source
<b>1957–1963</b>		
1957–59	ABCB inquiry into FM broadcasting acknowledges the objections to its commencement and concludes there are no compelling arguments for its introduction.	ABCB, <i>Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Annual Reports</i> , Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1957–59.
January 1957	HWT gains control of the Melbourne <i>Argus</i> , which includes shares in GTV-9. It later sells the GTV-9 shares to Sir Arthur Warner's Electronic Industries and closes the <i>Argus</i> .  As a result of the acquisition of the <i>Argus</i> , HWT was directed by ABCB to dispose of three Victorian rural radio stations (3SR, 3UL and 3YB).	Chadwick, op. cit., p. xxix, ' <a href="#">Your last Argus</a> ', <i>The Argus</i> , 19 January 1957, p. 1 and <i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entry for <a href="#">Arthur Warner</a> .
February 1957	Partnership between Frank Packer and the Theodore family dissolved. Consolidated Press becomes Australian Consolidated Press. <sup>80</sup>	Griffen-Foley, <i>Sir Frank Packer</i> , op. cit., pp. 209–10.
April 1957	Owners of Sydney and Melbourne television licences meet to plan strategy to gain control of new licences to be issued in other capitals—that is, to participate in networking arrangements. They	Herd, op. cit., pp. 57–9.

79. In October 1964, the first episode of the Melbourne-produced police drama, *Homicide*, was screened. The program ran on the Seven Network for 510 episodes over 12 years. Figure shows original cast members: Lex Mitchell as Detective Rex Fraser, John Fegan as Inspector Jack Connolly and Terry McDermott as Sergeant Frank Bronson, '[Homicide](#)', *Classic Australian Television*, accessed 12 March 2015.

80. EG Theodore had died in 1950 and his son John had taken over the family interests.

Milestone	Details	Document source
	fail to reach agreement on how this would operate.	
May 1957	The Government announces the extension of the ABC and commercial television services to other capital cities.  With regards to award of television licences for Brisbane and Adelaide (due to occur in 1958), the ABCB recommends that newspapers owners with interests in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide should not be allowed to own the new television licences as it considers such concentration would not be in the public interest.	ABCB, <i>Report and recommendations to the Postmaster General on application for a licence for a commercial television station in the Sydney and in the Melbourne area</i> , Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1963.
June 1957	Newspaper companies own 11 of the 108 commercial radio stations operating and hold shares in 29 others.	ABCB, <i>Ninth Annual Report</i> , op. cit., p. 12.
November 1957	Government stresses that its media policy and legislation is intended 'to encourage local ownership, control and operation of broadcasting and television stations'.	CW Davidson, <a href="#">Answer to Question without notice: television</a> , [Questioner: B Wight], House of Representatives, <i>Debates</i> , 6 November 1957, p. 1859.
September 1958	Cabinet discusses the award of television licences for Brisbane and Adelaide.  The Government rejects ABCB recommendation and awards the licences to groups which had cross ownership ties—Queensland Newspapers, largely controlled by HWT and the <i>Truth</i> newspapers, are the largest shareholders in Brisbane and News Ltd and Advertiser Newspapers control the Adelaide station.	ABCB, <i>Tenth Annual Report</i> , op. cit., pp. 23–5.
October 1958	Introduction of first Broadcasting Programme Standards, including general principles and provisions and special provisions for family and children's programs, religious matter, political matter, news, sporting events, use of foreign languages, competitions and advertising.	ABCB, <i>Eleventh Annual Report</i> , op. cit., p. 17.
October 1958	Television licences awarded in Perth to West Australian Newspapers and in Hobart to Davies Bros (owners of Hobart <i>Mercury</i> ).	ABCB, <i>Tenth Annual Report</i> , op. cit., p. 26.
November 1958	Ezra Norton's Sydney <i>Sunday Mirror</i> bought by O'Connell Pty Ltd (a company owned by Fairfax solicitors) with finance from John Fairfax. Fairfax argument that it exerted no control over the <i>Mirror</i> regarded with scepticism by some.	Souter, op. cit. p. 343.
November 1958	Menzies' Liberal/Country Party Coalition achieves a post-war record majority in the House of Representatives.	
1958	Federal Publishing Company (Hannan family) in partnership with Ezra Norton buys the <i>Double Bay Courier</i> .	M Le Masurier, 'Federal Publishing Company', in Griffen-Foley, ed., op. cit., p. 170.
April 1959	The Government announces that television to be extended to Canberra and major centres in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania. Priority for award of licences to be given to local, independent applicants.	ABCB, <i>Eleventh Annual Report</i> , op. cit., p. 24.

Milestone	Details	Document source
1959	The number of country newspapers reported as falling from 567 (published in 484 towns) in 1938 to 435.	Australian Provincial Press Association (APPA), <i>Proceedings of the twenty fifth annual conference</i> , 1959, p. 2.
1959	Edmund Rouse begins to transform the Launceston <i>Examiner</i> into a new media corporation, ENT (Examiner and Northern Television).	R Kirkpatrick 'Examiner (Launceston)', in Griffen–Foley. ed., op. cit., p. 160.
1959	Fairfax purchases one of Australia's most important provincial newspapers, the <i>Illawarra Mercury</i> .	I Willis, 'Illawarra Mercury', in Griffen-Foley, ed., op. cit., p. 212.
1960	The number of capital city daily newspapers declines further to 14 and the number of owners to seven.  HWT controls approximately 43 per cent of daily newspaper circulation in Australia.	Mayer, op. cit., p. 31.
February 1960	Rupert Murdoch acquires Cumberland Newspapers, a chain of 24 suburban titles in Sydney.  In response to Murdoch's purchase of Cumberland, John Fairfax and Consolidated Press establish Suburban Publications.  A territorial agreement is reached between Murdoch and Fairfax/Packer to divide Sydney suburban newspapers. <sup>81</sup>	Souter, <i>Heralds and Angels</i> , op. cit., p. 347.
March 1960	Restrictions imposed to restrict broadcasting in foreign languages to 2.5 per cent of broadcasting time, providing the information is broadcast later in English.	ABC, <i>Twelfth Annual Report</i> , Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1960, p. 24.
May 1960	Murdoch buys <i>Daily Mirror</i> , Sydney, from O'Connell Pty Ltd (Fairfax). <sup>82</sup>	Australian Newspaper History Group, <i>Newsletter</i> , 13, July 2001, p. 19.
May 1960	Amendments to the <i>Broadcasting and Television Act</i> limit the concentration of ownership of television stations and prevent control by foreign interests.  The Postmaster-General notes that commercial reality is often that a lesser holding than 51 per cent represents control of a company, so the Government deems that 15 per cent of voting power in a company represents control.	<a href="#">Broadcasting and Television Act 1960</a> and C Davidson, 'Second reading speech: <a href="#">Broadcasting and Television Bill 1960</a> ', House of Representatives, <i>Debates</i> , 18 May 1960, pp. 1844–5.

81. The companies competed only in the Bankstown area. As Gavin Souter notes, this agreement would have contravened the *Trade Practice Act*—if that legislation had been enacted at the time, Souter, *Heralds and angels: the house of Fairfax 1841– 1990*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1991, p. 347.

Note: John Fairfax Ltd (through a subsidiary, Castlecrag Pty Ltd) had formed a company with Consolidated Press to prevent the Murdoch purchase of Cumberland Newspapers. The company, Suburban Publications Pty Ltd, under the managing directorship of Frank Packer's elder son, Clyde Packer, was to have used the idle time of the *Mirror's* press at Kippax Street. After the Murdoch purchase, an associated company, Regional Newspapers Pty Ltd, offered to buy Anglican Press Ltd, which was in receivership, and its principals were authorised by the receiver to enter the *Anglican* premises in Chippendale. Another offer had also been made to the receiver by a new company, Australian Church Press Ltd, whose directors included Rupert Murdoch. On the night of 7 June [1960] there was a brawl at the *Anglican* office between a Regional Newspapers task force, led by Clyde Packer and his brother Kerry, and a team of publishers from the *Mirror*, led by a Murdoch employee.

82. Note the sale of the *Daily Mirror* was completed without its chairman, Sir Warwick Fairfax, being consulted. Managing Director, Rupert Henderson, engineered the deal. Sir Warwick was overseas at the time.

Milestone	Details	Document source
	The Act also gives licensees the right to apply to the ACBC if the owner of rights to a program refuses to sell that program under reasonable terms and conditions.	
September 1960	Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations (FACTS) formed.	M Turner, 'Free TV Australia,' in Griffen-Foley, ed., op. cit., p. 184.
October 1960	Consolidated Press buys the <i>Bulletin</i> .	Griffin-Foley, <i>Sir Frank Packer</i> , op. cit., pp. 241–2.
1960	First Australian content regulations for television put in place. The requirement is that after three years Australian programs should comprise no less than 40 per cent of commercial television content.	ABCB, <i>Twelfth Annual Report</i> , op. cit., p. 38.
	Other requirements include that imported television advertisements are prohibited.	
1960	Electronic Industries acquired by PYE (an English company), which once the new foreign ownership legislation is in place, sells its 62 per cent stake in GTV-9 to Packer.	Herd, op. cit., p. 64.
1960	Parliamentarians representing rural areas express concern that monopolistic interests are likely to extend to country television stations when licences issued.	Ibid., pp. 65–6.
1960	As television reach extended to regional areas, the ABCB is in favour of a situation where stations are locally owned, including stations owned by local cross-media interests, to prevent regional stations becoming satellites of metropolitan stations.	ABCB, <i>Report and recommendations to the Postmaster-General on application for commercial television licences in provincial and country areas</i> , Australian Government Publishing Service (AGPS), Canberra, 1960.
1960–61	Fairfax purchases additional shares in Amalgamated Television Services (ATN Sydney) and QTQ Brisbane.	ABCB, <i>Thirteenth Annual Report</i> , Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1961, p. 29.
	Australian Consolidated Press through Television Corporation Ltd gains more shares in GTV 9 Melbourne.	
May 1961	HWT buys more shares in BTQ Brisbane. Following release of the Report of the Radio Frequency Allocation Review Committee (Huxley Committee), the Government adopts the Committee's recommendations and discontinues experimental FM transmissions.	Ibid., p. 19.
	The Committee had been asked to investigate ways in which more frequency could be made available for television broadcasts and had found this could be achieved by using frequency reserved for FM broadcasting.	
October 1961	WIN television licensee (Wollongong) complains to ABCB that it is experiencing difficulties in obtaining programs because of an overlap with metropolitan stations (NBN Newcastle later raises similar complaint, April 1962).	ABCB, <i>Fifteenth Annual Report</i> , Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1962, p. 35.
December 1961	Menzies' Liberal/Country Party Coalition Government comes close to electoral defeat following the 1960–61 'credit squeeze'.	

Milestone	Details	Document source
1961	A joint publishing venture is formed between the Hannan family company, Australian Consolidated Press, and Fairfax Suburban Publications to merge five competing papers into three.	<a href="#">Hannanprint website</a> and Souter, op. cit., p. 348.
March 1962	Government approves proposal for third commercial television licences for Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide and second licence for Perth.	ABCB, <i>Fourteenth Annual Report</i> , op. cit., p. 34.
August 1962	HWT acquires 14.5 per cent interest in Davies Bros, publishers of the Hobart <i>Mercury</i> .	Mayer, op. cit., p. 31.
August 1962	Rupert Murdoch expresses interest in purchasing third commercial television licence in Sydney.	' <a href="#">Highly competitive situation</a> ', <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> , 8 August 1962, p. 10.
March 1963	HWT acquires a further nine per cent of Davies Bros.	Mayer, op. cit., p. 31.
April 1963	<p>ABCB recommends that the third commercial television licences in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide are awarded to companies with no newspaper interests.</p> <p>The Government accepts the recommendation and the licences are awarded to non-newspapers interests, including United Telecasters Sydney, a consortium which includes AWA and Email, and to Reg Ansett's Austarama Television in Melbourne.<sup>83</sup></p>	<p>ABCB, <i>Report and recommendations to the Postmaster-General on application for a licence for a commercial television station in the Sydney and in the Melbourne area</i>, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1963 and '<a href="#">TV licences awarded by Cabinet</a>', <i>The Canberra Times</i>, 6 April 1963, p. 3.</p>
July 1963	<p>Rupert Murdoch buys the regional television station WIN in Wollongong and threatens to broadcast programming into Sydney.</p> <p>Frank Packer sells shares in TCN to Murdoch to avoid this situation occurring. Packer and Murdoch then purchase NBN.</p>	<p>Griffen-Foley, <i>Sir Frank Packer</i>, op. cit., p. 263 and '<a href="#">Wollongong TV plan "unlikely"</a>', <i>The Canberra Times</i>, 8 July 1963, p. 1.</p>
August 1963	A High Court ruling invalidates licence conditions imposed on metropolitan television stations following complaints by WIN and NBN about difficulty in obtaining programs.	<a href="#">Television Corporation Ltd. v. The Commonwealth</a> ([1963] 109 CLR 59,HCA 30).
October 1963	<p>Publication of Vincent Committee report into Australian productions on television concludes that the role of ABCB is to ensure that programs which present a balance in subject matter, content and variety and which are of a high technical and artistic standard are provided to serve the best interests of the general public.</p> <p>Committee considers the ABCB to be reticent in enforcing its powers.</p>	<p>Senate Select Committee on the Encouragement of Australian productions for Television, <i>Encouragement of Australian Productions for Television</i>, (Vincent Committee), Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1963, paragraphs 9 and 11.</p>
November 1963	Menzies' Liberal/Country Party Coalition returned to government with an increased majority. <sup>84</sup>	

83. [Sir Reginald Myles \(Reg\) Ansett](#) (1909–1981) was an aviator and businessman. He began Ansett Airways in 1935. For more information see *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry, accessed 15 December 2015.

84. Note this election was for the House of Representatives only; a half Senate election was later held in December 1964.

Figure 6: Rupert Murdoch and the birth of the *Australian*



Source: Inside Story<sup>85</sup>

Milestone	Details	Document source
<b>1964–1971</b>		
April 1964	John Fairfax buys Federal Capital Press, publisher of the <i>Canberra Times</i> and part owner of CTC Television Canberra.	ANHG, <i>Newsletter</i> , 13, op. cit., p. 20.
April 1964	ABCB announces that the licence for United Telecasters in Brisbane would be withheld pending investigation of possible breach of ownership conditions. As a result of the investigation, it is found that Frank Packer controls three commercial television licences.	Herd, op. cit., pp. 79–80.
June 1964	Fairfax buys the Australian investments of Associated Television London. These include radio stations 2GB in Sydney and 2CA Canberra.	ABCB, <i>Sixteenth Annual Report</i> , Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1964, p. 12.
July 1964	News Ltd launches the <i>Australian</i> .	ANHG, <i>Newsletter</i> , 13, op. cit., p. 20.
September 1964 and November 1964	Minor amendments made to licensing conditions in the <i>Broadcasting and Television Act</i> .	<a href="#">Broadcasting and Television Act 1964</a> and <a href="#">Broadcasting and Television Act (No. 2) 1964</a>
1964	News Ltd purchases the <i>Northern Territory News</i> from Eric White and Associates, the company that had begun the publication in 1952.	D Carment and B James 'Press, Northern Territory', in Griffen-Foley, ed., op. cit.,

85. Rupert Murdoch (left) with *Australian* staffers Solly Chandler (right) and Hank Bateson looking at a page one proof of the *Australian* on 15 July 1964, K Inglis, '[Enter the Australian](#)', *Inside Story*, 14 July, 2009, accessed 15 December 2015. .

Milestone	Details	Document source
		p. 353 and <i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> entry for <a href="#">Eric White</a>
January 1965	In response to the Vincent Committee report, the proportion of Australian programs on metropolitan television is increased to 50 per cent.	ABCB, <i>Seventeenth Annual Report</i> , Australian Government Printer, Canberra, 1966, p. 68.
February 1965	A High Court ruling validates the incorporation and operations of the ABC.	<a href="#">Jones v Commonwealth (No 2) (1965) 112 CLR 206, HCA 6</a>
June 1965	In response to licensing issues raised by the award of the third commercial television licences and strategic investments by Sydney and Melbourne interests in regional television, the Government introduces legislation to strengthen the provision relating to ownership and control of television stations.  Under the legislation no person is to have more than five per cent interest in more than two licensee companies, no person is to have a prescribed interest (15 per cent) in three or more commercial television stations nationally or two or more stations in a territory or the capital city of a state.	<a href="#">Broadcasting and Television Act 1965</a>
August 1965	ABCB seeks the views of television industry on technical standards that should be adopted for colour television.	ABCB, <i>Seventeenth Annual Report</i> , op. cit., p. 59.
October 1965	Fairfax creates Macquarie Broadcasting Holdings after restructuring interests gained in its purchase of British radio and television group Associated Television Corporation.  Macquarie Broadcasting Holdings Stations include 2GB Sydney, 3AW Melbourne, 5DN Adelaide and 2CA Canberra.	ABCB, <i>Eighteenth Annual Report</i> , Australian Government Printer, Canberra, 1966, pp. 12–13.
1965	ABCB allows radio station 2CH to broadcast ten per cent of its programs in a foreign language.	Moran and Keating, op. cit., p. xxviii.
January 1966	Voluntary code governing the advertising of cigarettes is introduced by commercial television stations.	ABCB, <i>Twenty First Annual Report</i> , Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1969, p. 31.
February 1966	Government declares it still has no plans to introduce FM broadcasting but would consider further applications for experimental licences.	ABCB, <i>Eighteenth Annual Report</i> , op. cit., pp. 19–20.
May–June 1966	ABCB discussions with Federation of Australian Commercial Broadcasters regarding allowing the broadcast of telephone conversations in ‘open line’ programs—that is, programs that allow listeners to contribute by asking questions or contributing information—agree that these programs will be ‘developed’ in the near future.	Ibid., p. 22.
August 1966	ABCB rescinds rule which only allows religious programs to be televised before noon on a Sunday.	ABCB, <i>Nineteenth Annual Report</i> , Australian Government Printer, Canberra, 1967, p. 95.
November 1966	High Court ruling validates the ownership and control provisions of the <i>Broadcasting Act</i> .	<a href="#">Herald &amp; Weekly Times Ltd v Commonwealth (1966) 115 CLR 418, [1966] HCA 78</a>

Milestone	Details	Document source
November 1966		
	The 1966 election results in a landslide victory for Harold Holt's Liberal/Country Party Coalition Government. <sup>86</sup>	
December 1966	John Fairfax acquires an interest in David Syme (incorporated in 1948), publisher of the <i>Age</i> , as the result of the formation of a shareholding partnership which anticipates the end of a trust set up under David Syme's will.  At the time HWT also owns ten per cent of shares in Syme.	ANHG, <i>Newsletter</i> , 13, op. cit., p. 20 and E Morrison, <i>David Syme: man of the Age</i> , Monash University Publishing, Clayton, 2014, p. 399.
January 1967	ABCB introduces new advertising standards for television in response to survey of viewers (in 1965).	ABCB, <i>Nineteenth Annual Report</i> , op. cit., pp. 97–100.
March 1967	Government announces that it has no clear date in mind for introduction of colour television. Investigation of technical aspects to be left to ABCB.	A Hulme, ' <a href="#">Answer to Question without notice: Colour television</a> ', [Questioner: E Drury], House of Representatives, <i>Debates</i> , 1 March 1967, p. 221.
May 1967	First live television signals received via satellite. ABCB notes that in theory satellite could deliver services to those Australians unable to receive television via existing means.	ABCB, <i>Nineteenth Annual Report</i> , op. cit., p. 81.
June 1967	ABCB reports that of 111 commercial radio broadcasting stations operating, 61 are controlled by persons or organisations with interests in three or more stations.	Ibid., p. 20.
January 1968	A combined organisation, representing the major press, radio and television bodies, the Media Council of Australia, formed. Rupert Murdoch is its first Chair.	' <a href="#">Media Council formed</a> ', <i>The Canberra Times</i> , 19 January 1968, p. 11.
March 1968	Six Queensland regional newspaper groups merge to form Queensland Provincial Newspapers in response to fears of takeover moves by metropolitan media interests.	R Fitzpatrick, ' <a href="#">Development of a great newspaper chain: the provincial story</a> ', <i>Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland</i> , 12(1), 1984, pp. 83–102.
May 1968	News Ltd buys radio stations in Western Australia—Perth and Narrogin.	' <a href="#">WA radio stations sold</a> ', <i>The Canberra Times</i> , May 1968, p. 30.
June 1968	Postmaster-General states that there is not 'a sufficiently strong case' with regards to the inefficiency of existing broadcasting services to consider the introduction of FM broadcasting.	A Hulme, 'Ministerial statement: <a href="#">Frequency Modulation broadcasting</a> ', House of Representatives, <i>Debates</i> , 6 June 1968, pp. 2130–5.
December 1968	ABCB determines that the PAL (Phase Alteration Line) system would be adopted for colour television in Australia.	ABCB, <i>Twenty First Annual Report</i> , op. cit., p. 37.
December 1968	Frank Packer buys the Whitford chain of radio stations (including a Perth station) in Western Australia.	' <a href="#">Packer buys WA radio chain</a> ', <i>The Canberra Times</i> , 4 December 1968, p. 28.
June 1969	In response to concerns about increasing concentration of ownership of radio broadcasting stations, legislation further restricts the number of stations that can be owned—no person or company is able to control more than 15 per cent directly or indirectly or to own more than one metropolitan commercial	<a href="#">Broadcasting and Television Act (No. 2) 1969</a>

86. House of Representatives election; a half Senate election held in November 1967.

Milestone	Details	Document source
	broadcasting station in any state; more than four metropolitan commercial broadcasting stations in Australia; more than four commercial broadcasting stations in any one state; or more than eight commercial broadcasting stations in Australia.	
July 1969	HWT takeover of West Australian Newspapers.	G Bolton. 'West Australian', in Griffen-Foley, (ed.), op. cit., p. 492.
September 1969	John Fairfax acquires <i>South Coast Times</i> , publisher of <i>Illawarra Mercury</i> .	ANHG, <i>Newsletter</i> , 13, op. cit., p. 20.
September 1969	David Syme launches an evening daily, <i>Newsday</i> , in Melbourne to compete directly with the <i>Herald</i> .	Ibid.
October 1969	The Coalition Government, led by John Gorton, returned with less than 50 per cent of the estimated two-party preferred vote. <sup>87</sup>	
November 1969	Fairfax launches a daily afternoon paper in the national capital, the <i>Canberra News</i> .	Ibid.
January 1970	Government directs ABCB to take into consideration the ethical ramifications of Consolidated Press' payment to Ronald Biggs' wife for the Great Train robber's story when considering the renewal application for the organisation's TCN Nine television station.	' <a href="#">Minister replies on payment for TV story</a> ' <i>The Canberra Times</i> , 2 January 1970, p. 4.
April 1970	Opposition criticism of ABCB proposal that commercial television stations self-censor news programs—particularly with relation to the Vietnam War.	'Censorship proposal queried', <i>The Canberra Times</i> , 9 April 1970, p. 3.
May 1970	FACTS questions whether the ABCB has the right under legislation to mandate what programs are shown on television on Sunday mornings.	ABCB, <i>Twenty Third Annual Report</i> , Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1971, p. 40.
May 1970	Government announces terms of reference for inquiry into FM broadcasting.	' <a href="#">Public inquiry promised FM system</a> ', <i>The Canberra Times</i> , 8 May 1970, p. 11.
June 1970	ABCB report to Government on the introduction of colour television. No decision made by December for an introduction date.	' <a href="#">Colour TV date not set</a> ', <i>The Canberra Times</i> , 15 December 1970, p. 7.
June 1970	Australian Film Development Corporation and the Experimental Film and Television Fund established to provide federal government assistance in the production of programs for Australian television.	<a href="#">Australian Film Development Corporation Act 1970</a>
September 1970	John Fairfax acquires 25 per cent of Land Newspaper Ltd (later to be renamed Rural Press Ltd).	ANHG, <a href="#">Newsletter, 12</a> , May 2001, p. 19.
September 1970	Advocacy by Make it Australian Committee to raise Australian content levels to 75 per cent. FACTS argues in response that broadcasters are best able to gauge whether the public wants more Australian programs.	K Harrison, <i>The points system for Australian television: a study in symbolic policy</i> , National Monograph Series, 5, Royal Institute of Public Administration, 1980, pp. 8–10.
October 1970	ABCB completes inquiry into television content requirements and issues new standards that Australian content must comprise 50 per cent or more of programs between 6am and midnight. Four	ABCB, <i>Twenty Third Annual Report</i> , op. cit., pp. 120–2.

87. House of Representatives election only, half Senate election held 21 November 1970.

Milestone	Details	Document source
	hours of children’s programming to be broadcast and Australian-produced drama content to increase from two to six hours per week.	
1970	Government asks ABCB to investigate possible options for the introduction of cable television.	ABCB, <i>Twenty Second Annual Report</i> , Allprint, Melbourne, 1970, p. 39.
January 1971	ABCB establishes new Children’s Television Advisory Committee to provide advice on children and television. Over time, the Committee recommends a variety of initiatives, including incentive and quotas systems.	Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA), Australian Children’s Television Foundation and Australian Film Finance Corporation, <i>20 years of C: children’s television programs and regulation 1979–1999</i> , ABA, Sydney, 2000.
March 1971	Legislation amends provisions relating to ownership and control of commercial radio and television stations so that employees’ superannuation and provident funds are not used to evade the intent of restrictions.	<a href="#">Broadcasting and Television Act 1971</a>
May 1971	Revised code for advertising of cigarettes imposes further restrictions and extends code to radio broadcasting.	<a href="#">‘TV and radio to limit advertising of cigarettes’</a> , <i>The Canberra Times</i> , 4 May 1971, p. 3.
August 1971	Senate Standing Committee on Education, Science and the Arts announces it intends to hold an inquiry into Australian broadcasting.	L Murphy, <a href="#">‘Standing Committee on Education, Science and the Arts’</a> , <i>Senate, Debates</i> , 19 August 1971, p. 173.
September 1971	After the ABCB bans a live performance program, Packer’s Channel Nine questions whether the regulator has the power under legislation to ban the broadcast of these types of television programs, particularly programs on Sunday mornings.	<a href="#">‘Control board ban faces challenge’</a> <i>The Canberra Times</i> , 29 September 1971, p. 1.
1971	Continuing amalgamations and closures of country newspapers reported—370 paid circulation newspapers published in 344 country centres compared with 389 newspapers in 364 centres in 1968.	<i>Proceedings of the 29th Conference of the APPA</i> , 1971, p. 7.
1971	Survey of 32 countries shows Australia to have the second highest concentration of press ownership in the developed countries surveyed. <sup>88</sup>	RB Nixon and T Hahn, <i>‘Concentration of press ownership: a comparison of 32 countries’</i> , <i>Journalism Quarterly</i> , 48(1), 1973.

88. Countries surveyed included underdeveloped countries in Africa, South America, the Middle East and Asia, as well as countries labelled as developed by the researchers. Fifteen of the countries surveyed were included in this category. They included Britain, Germany, New Zealand, Denmark, Italy and the United States. Of the developed countries, only Ireland had more concentrated press ownership than Australia.

## Box 7: Clyde Packer's ownership concerns

Quoted in the *Canberra Times* 21 September 1971, Clyde Packer, in his capacity as joint managing director of Television Corporation Limited, argued:

'With due respects to government television, people's television, whichever you call it, I don't think that if we had a government-owned system solely operating in this country that there would be three million [television] sets in Australia today.'

Packer thought there was 'a "very big problem" in Australia with the concentration of media ownership':

'Perhaps the best way I can explain it is to say that in the nine largest cities in Australia there are 18 commercial television licences.

Of these, nine are controlled by two companies.

I suppose you could say that the Packer family was ... the last of the independents as it were.

I find it disturbing that 50 per cent of the metropolitan television stations in the largest cities and virtually 75 per cent of the daily newspapers are controlled by two groups.

I don't think that's healthy.'<sup>89</sup>

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89. 'TV "sells the sets"', *The Canberra Times*, 21 September 1971, p. 9, accessed 12 June 2015.