was now more than one radio for every adult Australian. Top 40 music drifted over the sands of Australian beaches all weekend long, solving the problem of ‘summer radio’.

While radio periodicals ran gleeful articles about the phenomenon of fan mail, the Australian Broadcasting Control Board and its successors kept voluminous files of complaints from listeners. The legalisation of talkback in 1967 meant that radio could pick up on ‘real-life’ events and listener opinions, and transmit them in ‘real time’. ‘What’s on your mind, Australia?’ asked John Laws at the beginning of each show.

Licence fees were abolished by the Whitlam Labor government. The introduction of community (also known as public) radio in the 1970s gave listeners from a broad range of sectors, including ethnic communities, music enthusiasts and students, more diverse programming, as well as the potential to contribute both on and off air. A 2002 study found that 20,000 Australians were involved as community radio volunteers. The Broadcasting Services Act 1992 provided for narrowcasting, which enabled the provision of services to targeted special-interest (such as religious or sporting) and geographical groups.

In 1981, shortly after the introduction of commercial FM radio, McNair Anderson ratings showed that television viewing by adult Australians had dropped for the first time since the advent of television, and that all age groups were spending more time listening to radio than watching television.

Sandy McCutcheon’s Australia Talks Back was heard nationally on ABC Radio from 1997 to 2008. For decades, Jan Macnamara has been drawing on anecdotes, poetry and music from around the country for his Sunday-morning ABC program, Australia All Over.

The rise of the internet facilitated more forms of listener interaction. Stations and networks established websites to provide program and personality information and conduct competitions. Many programs are now live-streamed, and web-cams are installed so that listeners can watch what is happening in the studio.

REPs S. Forde, M. Meadows and K. Foxwell, Culture, Commitment, Community (2002); B. Griffen-Foley, Changing Stations (2009); K.S. Inglis, This is the ABC (1983).

BRIDGET GRIFFEN-FOLEY

LOCAL CONTENT see Australian content

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPORTING

In Australia’s three-tiered political system, local government is the level closest to the people, and local councils are a rich source of news, particularly in rural and regional areas.

Councils have the power to enforce laws and impose rates to provide citizens with a range of infrastructure and community services. Journalists covering the ‘council round’ report on everything from municipal elections, annual budgets and strategic plans to local planning, environment, health and heritage matters, and council-sponsored community celebrations.

The first news coverage of local government affairs can be traced back to 1840, when the Southern Australian (1838–51) published details of a proposed Bill to form a Municipal Corporation for the City of Adelaide—Australia’s first local government.

In July 1842, the Sydney Morning Herald celebrated moves to establish the Town of Sydney. By 1872, the colonial government was no longer considered capable of providing adequate services to all areas, particularly regarding planning, streets and roads.

The introduction of local government was a significant development for democracy in regional Australia. People in the regions had lacked a strong political voice. Instead, there was a heavy emphasis on newspapers to ‘represent’ or to advocate community interests. Journals and newspapers played an instrumental role in petitioning for local government and political representation to be established in their towns.

Both local government and the news media—including suburban newspapers—are central to a healthy democracy, but the relationship is not always an easy one. The news media provide an important link between councils and citizens, and foster robust public debate about civic affairs. The editorial stance of many local media outlets includes advancing the interests of their communities and working with local government to achieve this. However, journalists also play an important ‘watchdog’ role in keeping local government accountable as part of the news media’s celebrated fourth estate function. The importance of local government reporting has been examined by public journalism scholars, who suggest that journalism cannot remain viable unless public life itself remains viable. They emphasise the importance of news media outlets initiating conversations about civic affairs among key publics.

Here, the aim is to create a ‘bottom-up’ orientation to public affairs reporting by letting citizens shape the news agenda, instead of elite sources such as council authorities doing so.

The importance of local government to other tiers of politics and journalism is evidenced by developments in related reporting specialisations and the career trajectories of prominent political reporters. For example, the Sydney press’s coverage of Australia’s first ‘Green Ban’—the fight between the local council and developers and Hunter’s Hill residents working with members of the Builders Labourers’ Federation to maintain Kelly’s Bush from 1971–74—foreshadowed the environmental political movement and the development of the specialisation of environmental journalism.
was now more than one radio for every adult Australian. Top 40 music dominated the airwaves, with many stations leveraging the national networks to broadcast the same music simultaneously. Meanwhile, television stations began to emerge, offering a new medium for entertainment and news. The introduction of television had a significant impact on how information was disseminated, as it offered a visual medium that could capture and hold the attention of audiences better than radio.

In conclusion, the rise of commercial media in the late 1960s and 1970s led to an increase in competition for audience share. As a result, media outlets became more focused on capturing and retaining viewers, which led to the development of more diverse programming and the introduction of new technologies such as彩色 television. This period marked a turning point in the history of Australian media, as it set the stage for the development of a more fragmented and diverse media landscape in the following decades.