This is the published version:


Available from Deakin Research Online:

http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30074346

Reproduced with the kind permission of the copyright owner

Copyright: 2014, Journalism Education and Research Association of Australia
Are there news gaps in rural/regional Australia? Researching media plurality beyond Finkelstein

Kristy Hess, Lisa Waller and Matthew Ricketson

Abstract

Rural/regional news is emerging as a vital area of media policy and research throughout the world as industry bodies, governments and academics grapple with debates concerning the future of news in a complex digital world. However, there has been little examination of media plurality at the rural/regional level, or research into the sustainability of the sector in Australia. Such concerns go to questions of what roles industry and government might play in ensuring its future. The Finkelstein report in 2012 noted that many rural/regional newspapers in Australia had limited resources and consequently low capacity for in-depth coverage of local issues. In the meantime, the funding model of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (which services rural/regional areas as part of its charter) has come under intense scrutiny by the federal Liberal-National Party coalition government. Signs from abroad – especially from the United Kingdom – are troubling. Several independent inquiries have called for policy initiatives to address what British scholars describe as the growing “democratic deficit” created by the closure of hundreds of local UK newspapers since 2004. This paper canvases current and emerging media policy settings in the UK, the United States and Australia before posing some broader questions on the future of rural/regional news in Australia.

Introduction

Reaction to Fairfax Media’s plans to close a number of its local newspapers in an attempt to save $40 million a year (Burns, 2014; Markson, 2014; James & McLaren, 2014) suggests rural/regional news has not been on most media watchers’ watch lists until now (see Richards, 2014). This paper argues that there is an urgent need to take stock of the health and future of the nation’s rural/regional media (see Waller & Hess, 2014). We begin where one of the most recent examina-
tions of the Australian media left off. The Report of the independent inquiry into the media and media regulation (Finkelstein, 2012) found there was a need to protect, or bolster, the types of news and information channels available across regional/rural Australia. The report argued that shortcomings in journalistic surveillance and in the richness of the media environment were felt most at the local level, outside major cities. The report recommended the Productivity Commission be given a reference to study “the health of the news industry and make recommendations on whether there is a need for government support to sustain that role” (Finkelstein, 2012, p. 11), but the then federal Communications Minister Stephen Conroy rejected this recommendation (2014).

The importance of regional news services has been highlighted as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation prepares for hundreds of job losses and newsroom closures in response to more than $250 million in Federal Government funding cuts. In November 2014, the ABC announced it would axe Radio National’s popular Bush telegraph program, cut the number of Newcastle radio staff and close five regional sites. This decision came despite comments from managing editor Mark Scott earlier in 2014 where he argued for the importance of rural news services being protected in any funding decisions:

Forget about Twitter and mobile phones, the ABC covers vast areas of Australia and if the power is down you can still listen to the ABC on your radio ... I find the thought of any cut to the ABC rural network unthinkable. They aren’t running a political line, they are just giving us market information, funeral notices ... it’s a unique service where commercial radio just isn’t viable. (Massola, Knott & Mitchell, 2014)

The ABC’s UK counterpart, the BBC, has faced a challenge of its own concerning the production and future of regional news (Baines, 2013). In 2008, the BBC argued there was “nobody who can be satisfied with the quality of local news in most parts of the UK” (Lyons, 2008, cited in Fenton et al., 2010). BBC management viewed the gap as a public service issue and posed a £68 million initiative to introduce local video to online news sites. The BBC Trust rejected the proposal, mainly on the grounds that an expansion of BBC local was a threat to commercial media services, especially newspapers (Lyons, 2008).

Since 2005, however, at least 248 local newspapers have closed their doors in Britain (Graham-Dixon, 2012), leaving some towns and provinces without a local news provider. And this situation is predicted to worsen in the coming decade. The British Advertising Association estimates the press advertising market is likely to shrink even further – by between £700 million and £1.6 billion – by 2019, with the regional press taking most of the impact. The decline of local media (including, in some towns, the wholesale disappearance of local newspapers) leaves citizens starved of information and local institutions less accountable, creating a growing “democratic deficit” (Barnett, 2009; see also Media Power and Plurality, 2014).

Meanwhile, in the United States, the Knight Commission has argued that the US’s information needs are yet more urgent due to the impact of the global financial crisis. Its 2009 report also stated that the digital age was not “yet serving democracy fully” and contended that the US needs “informed communities”:

... places where the information ecology meets people’s personal and civic information needs. They need information to participate fully in our system of self-government, to stand up and be heard. Mergers, declining advertising revenue and shrinking audiences were identified as threats to the civic value of news. (Knight Commission, 2009, p. xi)

The report found the financial challenges facing private news media could pose a crisis for democracy and that public media should provide better local news and information. It also highlighted the importance of not-for-profit and non-traditional media for journalism and the need for improved government accountability.
Australia has not experienced the same rapid demise of its rural/regional press as the UK. Readers continue to be loyal to their local newspaper (Bowd, 2010; Hess, 2013; see also Victorian Country Press Association, n.d.), but this does not mean they are immune from the same pressures facing traditional news outlets worldwide (Murschetz, 2013, pp. 4-5). These include the collapse of existing business models in digital space, along with the arguably reduced value of the news they offer; as well as audience fragmentation. In Australia and the US, small print and broadcast media outlets are being swallowed up by big conglomerates, or making deep cuts to editorial budgets to address a decline in advertising revenue. The Finkelstein report noted that regional radio and TV networks, as well as newspapers, had cut back on their newsgathering, leaving some communities with poor services. However, it had little research evidence about rural/regional media on which to base its findings or recommendations. The Australian situation is in contrast to the UK and the US, where for the past decade academics and industry have been closely examining and debating the state of the rural/regional media, and researching the rise of the hyperlocals (see Fenton et al., 2010; Barnett, 2009; Nee, 2014).  

There has been no comprehensive study of the state of Australia’s rural/regional media. In 2013, the News & Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra held a workshop with Professor Robert Picard from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University on the state of the news media in selected Australian regions (Freeman, 2013a; Freeman, 2013b). This preliminary work made it clear that Australia is yet to develop a clear picture of how its local and regional media is serving society’s news needs, or a lively discussion about what kinds of industry, government and social actions will best ensure its health and wellbeing. This article makes a case for why research on the state of Australia’s rural/regional media is needed to address those gaps now, and concludes with our thoughts on the kind of research approach and questions such studies might explore. In the sections that follow we review what is known about the state of Australia’s rural/regional media, the importance of the sector and the pressures it faces. We then turn to the current thinking on media plurality in the UK and initiatives being undertaken there to ensure there is a diverse range of quality news at the local level.

Regional media in Australia

The Report of the independent inquiry into the media and media regulation (Finkelstein, 2012), the State of the newspaper industry in Australia (Papandrea, 2013), the State of the media report by the Australian Press Council (2008) and the Federal Government’s report on Media ownership regulation of Australia (Gardiner-Garden & Chowns, 2006) have provided some detail about the production, distribution and consumption of local news (see also Simons, 2007). However, these were all broad inquiries that did not focus in depth on the rural/regional context. They provide some important facts and statistics, but there is no clear and comprehensive picture of what, where and how local news is generated and shared across regional Australia.

While newspapers appear to be the dominant provider of local news in small towns and cities where audit data on circulations is accessible (see Bowd, 2010; Hess, 2014), they are not the only medium servicing regional/rural areas. Finkelstein (2012) identified newspapers, commercial TV and radio services, public broadcasting and community radio as servicing regional areas, but noted that overall news coverage of local communities was modest. The study did not consider the emergence of independent hyperlocal startups, nor did it mention the ABC Open initiative (ABC Open, n.d.), which began in 2010 to serve regional Australia. This is not surprising, as providing a detailed breakdown, or examination, of the health, quality and future of local news media across regional/rural Australia was beyond its brief.

There are 37 regional daily newspapers in Australia, more than 230 non-daily newspapers and about 150 regional community or partly paid newspapers; at least 190 radio stations (commercial, ABC and community) and more than 50 TV stations serving regional areas (Finkelstein, 2012).
stein, 2012; Gee, 2011). Some of the major players in Australia’s regional news network include Fairfax/Rural Press, which owns more than 200 regional and community newspapers and the most diverse internet portfolio in Australia under the ownership of a single media conglomerate (McCarthy, 2009, p. 59). APN Australian Regional Media publishes 12 daily newspapers, more than 60 community newspapers and non-daily publications, and about 30 regional news websites (APN Australian Regional Media, 2014). Seven West Media publishes 21 regional newspapers, has commercial television networks in regional Queensland and regional affiliates broadcasting the Seven network’s content in Victoria, NSW and WA. It also has nine radio licences across regional WA (Seven West Media, 2011). Other major players with regional broadcast licences include Southern Cross Media, Broadcast Operations P/L, The WIN Corporation, NBN Television (an independent affiliate of the Nine Network) and Prime Media Group.

The ABC’s local radio service is based mainly in larger regional cities and provides a local news service relating to the region (Finkelstein, 2012). It has 88 reporters working in 48 regional newsrooms and provides more than 3400 hours of regional radio news bulletins across Australia each year. In its 2013 submission to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee on its news services in rural and regional Australia, the ABC said that as part of the additional $10 million in federal news funding allocated in response to recommendations from the Finkelstein report (2012), it would expand its resources in regional areas, with a particular focus on increasing its capacity to produce video content (ABC, 2013). The Australian community broadcast sector has 360 community radio licensees, 66 per cent of which are located in rural/regional Australia (Community Broadcasting Foundation, 2014). The McNair Ingenuity research study of community radio found that 64 per cent of non-metropolitan listeners in 2010 and 66 per cent in 2008 nominated local news and information as a reason for listening to community radio (McNair Ingenuity Research, 2008, as cited in Bowd, 2010). Finkelstein noted, however, that community radio services related mostly to localised communities, and were largely run by volunteers, with little capacity for regular coverage of local news.

There is yet to be an Australian study of hyperlocal websites serving small towns and cities and their capacity to generate quality local news. The digital age also presents a challenge in distinguishing what we even mean by “local” news in an increasingly globalised world. For example, it is difficult to gauge the size and scope of a “local” news outlet’s audience (Hess, 2013). A reliance on circulation figures to gauge both size and strength of a newspaper is considered problematic (Thomas, 2006). Even the term “newspaper” needs to be reconsidered, with some scholars posing the question whether a newspaper stops being a newspaper when its format moves from print into online (Franklin, 2008; Hess, 2013).

How diverse is news at the local level?

Diversity is considered a key indicator of a healthy, democratic media system (Picard, 2013). The Finkelstein report (2012) highlighted that the potentially large number of sources in the Australian mediascape was not truly reflective of the level of diversity available in any one local area from major independent sources. The inquiry found capital cities have the greatest diversity, with up to 14 independent traditional sources (some with two newspaper publishers and 12 radio/TV services). Major regional cities had 10 or fewer, and smaller communities had eight or fewer (Papandrea & Ricketson, 2013, p. 121).

Policymakers have taken steps to address the issue of diversity (more often referred to as “media concentration”) during the past decade. In 2006, the Federal Parliament amended the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 to change cross-media ownership restrictions and include new rules addressing media diversity. In order to ensure regional communities continued to receive local content, new local content requirements were introduced. The Australian Communications and Media Authority undertook a study in 2013 to determine the effectiveness of these changes.
The study sought to identify awareness, use of, perceived importance and preferred source(s) for accessing local content in regional Australia. It also covered satisfaction with the amount of local content available. The study reached six main conclusions, with the ACMA suggesting that regional Australia’s need for local content was generally being met through a combination of currently available sources (ACMA, 2013). The findings emphasised that local content, whether on TV or radio, in newspapers or the internet, was very important to rural/regional Australians.

While these findings appear positive, what is understood to be “local” news and the quality of information being provided to audiences has generated some debate. The Finkelstein report (2012) argued many rural/regional newspapers had limited resources and consequently low capacity for in-depth coverage of local issues: “Much of the content is in the form of generic news with little independent analysis” (Finkelstein, 2012, p. 328). It argued that to the extent they are local, newspapers were particularly critical to the coverage of matters of local interest and that further weakening of their already modest contribution to informing rural/regional communities would not be desirable.

This finding is important, as there is concern that the increasing number of takeovers of small news outlets across Australia has had an adverse effect on the resourcing and quality of the news and information they provide. Bowd (2010) argues that while Australian newspapers may benefit from access to more sophisticated printing facilities and resources by being part of a network of publications, it may also encourage a reduction in focus on local news and information. More generally, the bid to increase profits puts pressure on budgets allocated for newsgathering and quality reporting (Hampton, 2010, p. 8). Some journalists in rural Australia work in newsrooms where there are only one or two journalists producing news (Hess, 2013). Ewart, in her study on the benefits the digital media environment presented for small newspapers, argued that regional newsrooms were under-resourced and the economics of setting up interactive media platforms warranted further consideration (Ewart, 2003). As Lauterer (2006) argues, lack of resources is a bigger issue for smaller newspapers in the US than for their metropolitan counterparts:

> Often a community newspaper must rely on its own limited resources … if the editor gets sick there’s no one to fill his shoes … if most of the staff eats tainted fruit and comes down with hepatitis A, there is no one to put out the paper. (Lauterer, 2006, p. 8)

In the UK, Barnett (2009) contends that for local media outlets owned by large conglomerates, the processes of centralisation and standardisation of editorial approaches, and homogeneity of output, are part of the process of maximising shareholder value. This may be a sensible short-term approach to business, but it can sacrifice journalism that is rooted in local communities. Barnett observes that it is very difficult to quantify the financial return on good journalism, but very easy to quantify the outgoing cost of journalists’ salaries and expenses (Barnett, 2009, p. 10).

In times of cost cutting and economic rationalism, journalists on rural/regional newspapers have become increasingly reliant on information supplied via media release (Sissons, 2006; Hess & Waller, 2008). The reproduction of media releases with very little journalistic input is described as “churnalism” (Davies, 2008). Scholars in the UK argue that when media outlets demand high editorial volume and invest little in proper journalistic investigation, the long-term result is likely to be a “democratic deficit” (see especially Barnett, 2009, p. 8).

**Media plurality at the local level in Britain and the US**

The UK Department of Culture, Media & Sport (2013) says the concept of “media plurality” concerns the information that people consume on a daily basis, which informs their views and perspectives on the world. It draws on a definition from the UK’s independent regulator and com-
petition authority for communication industries, Ofcom, to highlight the desired outcomes of a plural media market. These are twofold: first, ensuring there is a diversity of viewpoints available and consumed across and within media enterprises; and second, preventing any one media owner or voice from having too much influence over public opinion and the political agenda (2013, p. 4).

In February 2014 the House of Lords Communications Select Committee published its report on media plurality (House of Lords, 2014). It provides a clear argument about why plurality cannot be left to the market or competition policy alone. Barnett (2014) praises the report for putting the citizen and Ofcom firmly at the centre of a new plurality regime for the UK. However, he is critical of the House of Lords report at the local level. He argues there is little attention paid to the different creative approaches that could be feasible, or to the “potentially enabling role of government policy” (Barnett, 2014, n.p.).

The UK is arguably at the forefront of research on media plurality among advanced liberal democracies in the light of the exponential decline of its local press. A study by the Newspaper Society in Britain (as cited in Fenton, 2011, p. 65) notes that 101 local newspapers closed down between January 2008 and August 2009 and local commercial television and radio news outlets were struggling. Many local radio stations have also been reduced to absolute minimal editorial staffing, with one found to be functioning with only two journalists trying to serve the entire region, feed the website and edit the programs (see Fenton et al., 2010).

Fenton et al. (2010) argue that local and community news is vital to democracy, community cohesion and civic engagement, but that all forms of commercial local news, including print, broadcast and online, are operating with decreasing profits and fewer journalists/news professionals. They have noted the rise of dozens of hyperlocal online news initiatives run by volunteers, which they suggest have potential as valuable additions to the British media landscape, but are not “a substitute for regular reliable, professional, independent, investigative journalism and news”. A Federal Communications Commission report in the US, meanwhile, referred to not-for-profit news providers as “pip-squeaks”, compared with the “giants” of public broadcasters and other commercial media outlets (Waldman, 2011, p. 198; see also Nee, 2014).

Fenton and associates (2010) argue that any approach to revitalising local news services must do three things:

1. Recognise and seek to support the link between local news and democracy – how it functions and what is required for it to thrive;
2. Consider in detail the demand side of news – what people want from their local news and why it matters to them;
3. Understand the economic, regulatory and technological context in which the changes are taking place.

The Media Plurality Project in the UK (Media Power and Plurality, 2014) has reviewed the changes to media ownership rules at local level to consider what policy initiatives might address the growing democratic deficit. It is examining the nature, efficacy and democratic potential of local online initiatives. Barnett (2009) argues there are four areas that can be identified in a conceptual framework for identifying the democratic deficit of lost journalism in local areas. These are:

4. Informing: Such information may not be instrumental but simply to generate greater awareness, such as proposals to close a new hospital wing or change the style of local policing;
5. Representing: Conveying the popular voice from citizens and voters to local and national elites. Local media can be champions of their own localities – drawing the attention of national governments or institutions to particular achievements, inadequacies or shortages which may result respectively in greater recognition, economic investment or remedial action;
6. Campaigning: A more proactive version of representation attuned to the specific needs of local communities such as calls for action on an unsafe road, or a proposed closure of a local amenity;

7. Interrogating: an enterprising approach taken to holding to account those in positions of power and authority by scrutinising their activities as well as their statements.

Solutions and subsidies

In the past few decades, nations throughout the world have used subsidies, both direct and indirect, to achieve a broad range of policy goals, including but not limited to supporting a vibrant news media sector. In recent years, calls for government to intervene in the news media sector have grown louder as the commercial problems faced by news media organisations in the US and the UK, as well as Australia and elsewhere, have intensified. The exact nature, purpose and efficacy of any of the various subsidy proposals remain matters of widespread debate internationally (see Murschetz, 2013).

Picard (2013) counsels caution before governments rush headlong into providing subsidies. He argues that the internet is not the core of newspapers’ commercial problems, but it does compound them. In the light of this, some recent schemes deserve attention. In the UK, journalism scholars (Fenton et al., 2010) have called for the introduction of local news hubs, supported with funds from local authorities and foundations, which could bring together communities and professional journalists. The hubs would provide training, volunteer mentors and technical support for communities to engage in identifying, investigating and reporting local news. They suggest subsidies could come from local government advertising – guaranteeing that their information campaigns reach the target audience/s while supporting and nurturing local media.

In the US, The Knight Commission’s Informing communities and sustaining democracies report called for increased support for public service media, as well as increasing the role of higher education and community and non-profit institutions as hubs of journalistic activity. It wanted to ensure that local governments provide low-cost access to public records and make civic and social data available to the public. It also identified a role for research to develop systematic quality measures of community information ecologies and study how they affect social outcomes.

Another proposal in the US is to increase support for local and regional non-profit news outlets that began emerging in 2005 (see Nee, 2014). A Federal Communications Commission taskforce on the future of media also lauded the digital non-profits for their public service, but did not recommend direct government support for them, despite acknowledging their economic vulnerability (Waldman, 2011). The report stated that the main focus of public policy should not be in providing funds, but rather in helping “create conditions under which non-profit news operations can gain traction” (Waldman, 2011, p. 352). The only monetary support the taskforce recommended was in the form of targeting government advertising dollars toward local news outlets instead of national entertainment media. Nee’s research aimed to determine how leaders of these civic journalism startups view the government’s role in ensuring their survival. Most were not open to direct government subsidies, but have not ruled out assistance in the form of advertising, contracts for services, and payments in kind (Nee, 2014).

Greenslade and Barnett (2014) argue that newspapers as charitable organisations might offer a future model for local press. They give the example of a newspaper in Maidenhead in the UK that transformed into a charitable trust to ensure its independence and foster community spirit. They say it will take a few more similar initiatives before any kind of precedent is established, “… but it is just possible that [this] defining step might … presage a new wave of journalism enterprises which are just as independent, just as dedicated to serving the local community, and maybe just as long-lived” (Greenslade & Barnett, 2014, p. 67).
In Australia, the Finkelstein inquiry (2012) found that regional media in Australia could benefit from financial support from government to address the “shortcomings in journalistic surveillance and the richness of the media environment felt most at local levels, outside the major cities” (2012, p. 331). Finkelstein noted:

There is some evidence that both regional radio and television stations and newspapers have cut back substantially on their newsgathering, leaving some communities poorly served for local news. This may require particular support in the immediate future, and I recommend that this issue be investigated [by the Productivity Commission] as a matter of some urgency. (Finkelstein, 2012, p. 11)

In 2011-12 the Federal Government committed $12.5 million to the Community Broadcasting Foundation over four years to increase community content production and establish a new community radio content development fund. It suggested the Productivity Commission could make a small increase to that funding to assist community radio stations in rural/regional areas to establish and maintain news websites dedicated primarily to local news reporting. Eligibility could be restricted to community radio services located in areas where a local newspaper is not published.

**Developing an Australian regional media plurality research agenda**

The aims of this discussion up to now have been to draw attention to questions and concerns raised in the Finkelstein report about the health of Australia’s regional/rural media; to review what we know about the sector; and to provide a snapshot of how issues of media plurality are being addressed by industry and scholars in the UK and the US. We now turn to how we might begin to tackle these issues in a study of media plurality in rural/regional Australia. We take our research cue from Picard (2013), who privileges the needs of society above the financial concerns of media organisations in considering the future of news. When we use this lens of inquiry, a range of novel research aims emerge.

First, if there are news gaps, or potential news gaps, in regional/rural Australia, where are they and, importantly, what are the causes and how could they be closed? In order to make this assessment we need to map the uneven media terrain identified in the Finkelstein report. We can then examine these questions in a range of specific geo-social settings (Hess, 2013; Hess & Waller, 2014) to generate a detailed understanding of the factors at play across regional/rural Australia. This research goal also requires an examination of the kinds of government support that exist now, such as the indirect subsidy of local government advertising to newspapers, and how other types of direct or indirect subsidies might be effective in ensuring a healthy news system at the regional/rural level. This leads to a second line of inquiry: what new policy directions might be necessary to ensure a robust news sector at the regional/rural level? For example, would government support be best directed toward new and emerging hyperlocal start-ups that engage closely with their communities and seek to provide a good news service for them, rather than the local community radio station or newspaper?

Third, are Australian citizens identifying and plugging news gaps in regional Australia with their own media? In the UK there has been much academic and industry interest in the rise of hyperlocal start-ups and the ways in which they might go some way to ensuring media plurality at the local/regional level. Fourth, how are people in regional Australia changing their news consumption patterns, and what are the community perceptions of the changing news landscape? Fifth, we know digital technologies are shaping the production, distribution and reception of news at all levels. However, the internet’s ability to enable an endless proliferation of views does not completely mitigate the problems of heavy concentration of ownership in the Australian media. There is therefore an ongoing need to examine the impact of digital technologies on local news media production because this can have implications for democracy. Are other regional news...
outlets relying on and recycling “primary” reporting by the local newspaper and what impact does media concentration have on the types of information included and excluded for regional audiences’ consumption (see, for example, Barry, 2014)?

Other issues that deserve scholarly consideration include what we actually mean by “local” news and developing meaningful ways to measure “newspaper” health in the digital age. This includes gauging the financial wellbeing of regional/rural media providers. Finally, how does regional/rural news media contribute to understandings of local places, the wider world, and the interactions that occur in between? (Hess, 2013; Hess & Waller, 2014).

While the Finkelstein report provides some details on the current media landscape, it examines each media format independently, overlooking the interrelationships between various media both for journalism practice and the subsequent implications for how communities use multiple means to become informed. It should be noted, though, that the myriad ways that media contributes to community formation in the digital age was beyond its ambit. The next stage in this research project will therefore involve developing methodologies to examine media plurality at the regional/rural level in Australia through the media-related practices of a wide range of people, including those in government and industry, to discover how specific geographically based communities use their media and how the changes taking place may or may not serve their civic and personal needs – and shape their world in the digital age.

Notes

1. Professor Matthew Ricketson was appointed by the Federal Government in 2011 to assist Ray Finkelstein QC in conducting the Independent Inquiry into the Media and Media Regulation which reported to government in early 2012.

2. We define hyperlocal news as a cultural phenomenon that emphasises a rejuvenation in “excessively local” news. We acknowledge, however, that in many industry circles and scholarship, the hyperlocal have largely been referred to as small, independent, web-based enterprises that serve a niche geographic area.

3. Geographer Graeme Hugo (2001) describes “non-metropolitan” as areas outside capital cities or centres with more than 1000 but fewer than 100,000 inhabitants, which is also helpful in setting parameters for this study.


5. In Australia, print newspapers that generate advertising revenue but are distributed free of charge are generally referred to as “community” newspapers.
References


AIR 36(2) 167


Authors
Lisa Waller and Kristy Hess are senior lecturers in journalism at Deakin University in Victoria, and Matthew Ricketson is professor of journalism at the University of Canberra.