

# **Two hundred years of Sydney newspapers:**

## **A SHORT HISTORY**

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**This booklet**, *Two Hundreds Years of Sydney Newspapers: A Short History*, has been produced to mark the bicentenary of publication of the first Australian newspaper, the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, on 5 March 1803 and to provide a souvenir for those attending the Australian Newspaper Press Bicentenary Symposium at the State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, on 1 March 2003. The Australian Newspaper History Group convened the symposium and records its gratitude to the following sponsors:

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## **Introduction**

Sydney is singularly fortunate in that, unlike other Australian cities, its newspaper history has been well documented. Hence, most of this short history of Sydney's newspapers is derived from secondary sources, not from original research. Through the comprehensive listing of relevant books at the end of this booklet, grateful acknowledgement is made to the writers, and especially to Robin Walker, Gavin Souter and Bridget Griffen-Foley whose work has been used extensively.

### **The *Sydney Gazette* and its contemporaries**

George Howe, the person responsible for this gathering to mark the bicentenary of the first Australian newspaper, was a transported convict. He was sent to Sydney after his death sentence for theft had been commuted. He had learned his trade as a printer from his father on St Kitts, British West Indies. Soon after his arrival in Sydney in 1800, he was appointed government printer. This role was expanded when he published Australia's first newspaper, the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, from 5 March 1803. The paper was basically a weekly official medium for the publication of official notices. Indeed the masthead prominently stated, "Published by Authority". The first page of the first issue set the style: most of it was devoted to General Orders regulating boats' cargoes, granaries at Parramatta and Hawkesbury, and the import of spirits. There was, in addition, some general news and advertisements, albeit all under close official supervision and censorship.

Publication of the *Sydney Gazette* was suspended between August 1807 and May 1808 because of a disagreement between Howe and Governor Bligh. George's son, Robert, assisted on the *Sydney Gazette* from a very early age, and succeeded his father as government printer in 1821. The *Sydney Gazette* became bi-weekly in 1825 and, briefly, a daily in 1827 (from 1 January to 10 February). Robert Howe drowned in 1829. George Howe's second son, George Terry Howe, founded a newspaper, the *Tasmanian and Port Dalrymple Advertiser*, in Launceston in 1825. It was the first provincial newspaper in Australia.

In 1831 the *Sydney Gazette* was appearing thrice weekly, pursuing conservative causes in support of the established order. Meanwhile, competition arrived. The *Australian* (**not** the current paper with that title) was first published in 1824. It appeared twice weekly, with liberal views. It opposed Governor Ralph Darling and he, in turn, unsuccessfully sought to control it by licensing, stamp duty and prosecution for libel. The *Monitor*, founded in 1826, was also bi-weekly and liberal. The *Gleaner*, a weekly, existed for only a short time in 1827.

### **The nineteenth century: the *Sydney Morning Herald* dominates**

What is now Australia's oldest continuously published newspaper began in 1831, originally as a weekly under the title, the *Sydney Herald*. It can be argued that it is Australia's most important newspaper, as most of our history can be accessed and interpreted through it, and because it is the only newspaper comprehensively indexed.

It was founded by recent immigrants, Alfred Stephens, Frederick Stokes and William McGarvie. The *Sydney Herald* struck a chord with the upper class of the growing colony – the only people then likely to buy newspapers, for not only were they relatively expensive, but also, of course, they were no use to the many who were illiterate and destined to live by the rules of their betters in this very ordered society. The *Sydney Herald* was successful, overhauling its competitors in both sales and advertising. In May 1832, it started publishing bi-weekly and in July 1838, tri-weekly. On 1 October 1840, it became a daily. At the end of 1840 it incorporated the *Colonist*, a weekly founded by the Rev John Dunmore Lang in 1835 to pursue his religious and political ambitions.

The *Monitor* expired in 1841, the *Sydney Gazette* in 1842 and the *Australian* in 1848. The *Commercial Journal and Advertiser*, founded in 1835, originally relied entirely on revenue from advertisements. It later took a more conventional approach, and apparently lasted until 1845. The *Weekly Register*, with liberal views, lasted from 1843 to 1845. The *Atlas*, with an anti-Governor Gipps view, existed from 1844 to 1848.

Several papers of appeal to and/or in support of working class interests were short-lived: *John Bull* in 1843, the *Dispatch* 1843-44, the *Bee* 1844-45, the *Star and Working Man's Guardian* in 1843-44, the *Sydney Weekly* in 1846 and the *Citizen* in 1846-47. Somewhat more successful was the *People's*

*Advocate*, 1848-56, which claimed a circulation second only to the *SMH*.

John Fairfax was a native of Warwickshire, England, where he had published newspapers. A letter he published was found to be libellous, resulting in bankruptcy. Fairfax sailed for New South Wales to restore his fortunes, arriving in 1838. After initial employment as a librarian, he formed a partnership with Charles Kemp, which purchased the *Sydney Herald* in February 1841. In 1842, they changed the title to the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Kemp sold his interest in the paper to Fairfax in 1853. It remained a family company for 137 years.

The *SMH* was first referred to as “Granny” in 1851, in the Legislative Council. The name stuck – it seemed to suit an institution with very strong views about what was “right and proper”. In politics the *SMH* strongly espoused the established order. For more than 110 years from its founding it could be relied upon as the upholder of conservative views on politics, society and economics. This firm line represented the views of the Fairfax family, and their editors, some of whom in the late nineteenth century were ministers of religion.

A significant competitor arrived in December 1850: the *Empire* edited by Henry Parkes. His financial woes caused its demise in August 1858, but the title was revived under different ownership in May 1859, lasting until February 1875. The *Daily Telegraph*, the *SMH*'s lasting competitor, was founded in July 1879. For long, it was a pale imitation of the *SMH*. It was half the price, but half the size: a penny compared to

twopence, and four pages compared to the *SMH*'s eight to ten pages.

Sydney's first afternoon paper, the *Daily News and Evening Chronicle*, lasted for only a couple of months in late 1848. The *Sydney Evening Mail*, described as "small and undistinguished" (Walker), had a short career in early 1859. The long-lived *Evening News* began in July 1867. For a few months in early 1870 the *SMH* experimented with the *Afternoon Telegram*. In May 1875 it tried again with the *Echo*. As usual with afternooners, this was smaller and a lighter read than the parent paper. It closed in 1893. Another short-lived afternoon paper was the *Globe* from 1885 to mid 1887. Soon afterwards, the afternoon *Australian Star* started in December 1887.

Weekly newspapers were an important feature of the Australian newspaper scene in the nineteenth century. Most major daily papers had their weekly counterpart. These provided a digest of the same news as the parent paper – sometimes literally, in the same typesetting – but with illustrations, at first line drawings and later photographs. The weeklies were especially important in remote areas without daily mail delivery and so they lost circulation as the railway network expanded. The *SMH*'s weekly was the *Sydney Mail*, which started as a weekly resumé of the *SMH* but changed into a high quality magazine with a fine reputation, especially for its illustrations. It began on 17 July 1860 and ceased on 28 December 1938. The *Australian Town and Country Journal*, published by Samuel Bennett of the *Evening News*, was also popular. It ran from January 1870 until 25 June 1919. The *Daily Telegraph*'s weekly, the

*World's News* (founded 1901), soon became just an entertainment magazine.

### **A journey by time machine**

What would we have found if we had been reading Sydney newspapers in, say, the late nineteenth century? The main newspapers were in the morning: the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Daily Telegraph*. On Mondays to Fridays these were usually up to ten pages and on Saturdays twice that. To our eyes, they would appear exceedingly grey. There was nothing to break up the columns of type – no photos or illustrations except line drawings on very special occasions. The front and back pages were all classified advertisements. To find the news of the day, we must turn to the middle pages. On the left-hand middle page were the influential editorials. These were followed by news summaries. Opposite, on the right-hand middle page, was the most important news of the day. Cables of overseas news usually appeared here. Other news and reports spread outwards from the middle pages.

Some reports in the daily newspapers would be familiar to us: domestic news subjects such as politics, farming, court cases, meeting reports, but the style was very different. Many articles would appear excessively long compared to now. Reports of Parliament, court cases and meetings would give an almost verbatim rendering of speeches, including interjections. Each Monday's papers would include long reports of the sermons preached in the principal churches on Sunday. There was only sparse reporting of sport, mainly horseracing, but also football, cricket, canoeing, archery, running and walking. Commercial



reports mainly consisted of listings of commodity and share prices. There were no reports of the daily activities of popular sportsmen or entertainers – although the weekly sporting papers (such as the *Referee* 1886-1939 and the *Arrow* 1889-1933) did indulge in “personality” profile articles.

Until the 1870s, Australians received their news from the rest of the world at the speed of sailing ships. There was great competition between newspapers to be first on board arriving ships to obtain overseas papers on board. These were quickly scanned and extensive extracts rushed into print – with news from Europe (in particular Britain) and America that was four months old. Often newspapers would have special editions, or supplements, after the arrival of ships in ports. Suddenly, in the late 1860s/early 1870s three events brought Australians into much quicker contact with the parts of the world that mattered to them. In 1869 the Suez Canal opened shortening the distance, steam replaced wind power on some ships also shortening voyage time, and most importantly of all, from 1872 a telegraph line connected Australia and Europe. Telegrams then were very expensive and used with great care and economy - usually they were only a few words. Thus overseas reports were supplemented with background material. A reader of newspapers in this period can detect the excitement at the new technology. The main news page (middle page) would have as a main heading something like “Overseas Cables – By Special Electric Telegram”. There would be a record of how the news was received as much as the substance. More extensive “letters” by sea mail from (mainly) Britain continued.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Daily Telegraph* were expanded on Saturdays because of the greater number of advertisements as well as literary articles.

Originally, skilled compositors compiled newspapers by handsetting each letter of type. The small letters (like these) came from the lower drawers or cases and the capital letters (LIKE THESE) came from the upper cases. Hence the terms, lower case and upper case. The pages of metal, or formes, were made up and placed on hand presses. The compositors laboriously took apart the pages, returning each letter to its position in the lower and upper cases. In the mid-nineteenth century, steam presses greatly speeded up the printing of newspapers. Around the end of that century, linotype machines, like giant typewriters, were introduced into major newspaper offices. For each keystroke by the compositor, a shot of molten lead of the required letter came into place. This was far quicker and easier, and required about one-third the number of composing-room staff. The *SMH*, with its unending flow of profitable classified advertisements, was big and rich and, it is claimed, had the biggest composing room of any newspaper in the world.

The two afternoon papers, the *Evening News* and the *Star*, superficially looked similar, but were a less serious read.

### **Distribution**

Newspapers were distributed to the country by a network based upon trains departing Sydney for each mainline in the late evening and the early morning.

The late evening trains were the “Mail trains”. With an elaborate series of connections, these served almost every line in NSW. Until 13 January 1940 the *SMH* and *Daily Telegraph* printed special evening editions with the following days’ dates in order to catch the Mail trains.

The early-morning trains were specially to meet the needs of newspapers. Generally they served only the main lines. The first was introduced on the Southern line from May 1887 for political reasons. The *SMH* and *Daily Telegraph* wanted assistance with transport to country districts and the NSW government was sympathetic, at least as regards the Riverina, and agreed to subsidise a train to convey newspapers there. The NSW government was very conscious that the Riverina is much closer to Melbourne than Sydney and was therefore afraid of losing it economically and socially to Victoria. The two Melbourne morning newspapers, the *Age* and the *Argus*, reached Wagga Wagga by about 6pm each day, whereas the Sydney morning papers did not arrive until the next day. The result was that almost no one bought the Sydney papers with their stale news. This meant, horror of horrors, that the people of the Riverina read Victorian news, but worse, they received Victorian views, and even worse, they responded to the advertisements in the Melbourne papers, resulting in the region’s trade being with Melbourne. The NSW government was therefore eager to facilitate the sale of Sydney papers in this region by running a daily train for their speedier delivery. Accordingly a Fast Mixed (combined passenger and goods train) was introduced from Sydney to Albury. The result was that areas north of

Wagga received Sydney papers before the Melbourne papers arrived and at Wagga they now arrived at the same time. Wagga and north thereof were saved for NSW, although south of Wagga was still in jeopardy.

### **The twentieth century: the only constant is change**

A hundred years ago the basics of reporting local news were similar to now: persistence in following leads and taking advantage of personal contacts. The technology, however, has changed considerably. In the late 1800s/early 1900s, all reporters required a high standard of shorthand. Reporting a long public meeting or court case meant concentrated note taking over a long period. Then, as deadlines drew near, you caught the next tram – or cab – to bring the news in. From the newsroom, handwritten copy went to the typesetters. As the twentieth century progressed, technology came to help – or at any rate, change - the manner of reporting. Typewriters and telephones in the 1900s, motor cars in the 1910/20s, photography in the 1920s, portable tape-recorders in the 1960s, computers in the 1970s, direct input by journalists in 1980s, satellite communication in the 1990s. Now reporters can do much of their investigations from their desks, but they will still not be successful without diligent personal contacts.

By the turn of the twentieth century costs of cables had declined significantly. Consequently, overseas news reports were fuller than, say, twenty years earlier. Nevertheless, newspapers from the major Australian cities found it worthwhile to form syndicates to share the costs of cables. These later amalgamated into Australian Associated Press, which

today supplies every daily paper. In the 1920s, radio transmission of photographs caused almost as much excitement as telegrams fifty years earlier. Today, of course, an unlimited amount of information and pictures from almost anywhere in the world is available at the click of a computer mouse. And news from overseas, supplied by agencies, is actually cheaper to obtain than news in the immediate neighbourhood, gathered through the hard slog of a reporter.

### **Appearances are everything**

From early in the twentieth century, classified advertisements started to be supplemented by display ads spreading over a number of columns and with illustrations. Occasionally line drawings would be used to illustrate articles, but only for exceptionally important news, for example in January 1901, the inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia and the death of Queen Victoria. The first photographic images in the *SMH* appeared on 21 August 1908 to illustrate the arrival in Sydney of a visiting United States Navy squadron. However, they were at first used very sparingly, mainly small portraits of people in the news. Gradually, a small section of the paper was put aside especially for photographs before they gradually made their way to the main news pages.

In 1924 the *Daily Telegraph* replaced advertisements on its front page with news. On 1 September 1942, as a result of wartime newsprint rationing, the *Daily* and *Sunday Telegraphs* changed to tabloid size. Other vicissitudes of the *Telegraph* are mentioned later.

The *SMH* was very conservative in its layout. It maintained the traditional layout mentioned above, inherited from Britain, of front and back pages devoted to classified advertising, with news inside. It continued this longer than most other major Australian newspapers, apparently on the premise that a serious newspaper did not need to highlight its news, and certainly did not indulge in eye-catching headlines to attract casual sales. The only concession to news on the front page was a single column of tightly packed news summary. Finally, the pressure on space imposed by wartime newsprint rationing, combined with a feeling that it was becoming old-fashioned, forced a redesign. The *SMH* placed news on the front page from 15 April 1944. (Among major newspapers, only the *West Australian* still held out – until December 1949.)

### **Newspapers come and go, but the *SMH* remains**

The Sydney newspaper scene in the 1920s was the most competitive Australia has ever experienced. There were four morning, two afternoon and four Sunday papers. The *Daily Guardian*, produced by the same company as *Smith's Weekly*, first appeared in 1923. It was a very popular paper, with such circulation boosters as free insurance and beach girl competitions. It was derisively known as the “Daily Girlie”. The Labour movement was suspicious of the main newspapers and had plans, never fully realised, to have Labour dailies in each capital. The *Labor Daily* first published in 1922, was a supporter of Lang Labor. It lasted until 1941 when (now called the *Daily News*) it was taken over by the *Daily Telegraph*.

With this competition, the *Daily Telegraph* buckled and appeared on a number of occasions likely to disappear. It survived, of course, but in the course of this, changed greatly a number of times. Firstly, in 1924 it modernised itself, including placing news on its front page, as mentioned above, and making more use of illustrations. It no longer seemed to be a clone of the *SMH*. Then in 1927, it changed into the new type of bright, breezy tabloid newspaper pioneered in Australia by the Melbourne *Sun*. It successively became the *Daily Telegraph News Pictorial*, *Daily Telegraph Pictorial*, and then simply *Daily Pictorial* as it went more and more downmarket. Under new ownership in 1931, it repositioned itself in the mid-market, once again becoming the *Telegraph*.

In February and March 1931, Associated Newspapers, having acquired most Sydney titles, closed the *Daily Guardian*, *Evening News* and *Sunday Pictorial*, while the *Daily Pictorial*, as mentioned, returned to being the *Daily Telegraph*. The *Sunday News* and *Sunday Guardian* also died in this period. This left Associated Newspapers with one morning (*Telegraph*), afternoon (*Sun*) and Sunday (*Sunday Sun*) paper. Frank Packer acquired control of the *Daily Telegraph* in 1936.

Above all this, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, continued unchangingly as the authoritative newspaper of NSW. No popular gimmicks for it. No competitions, free insurance offers, comic strips or political cartoons, and no headlines on the front page to catch the eye of the populace.

Sunday newspapers were another very competitive area in Sydney. Unlike some other states, they were

published in Sydney from an early date. First was the *Sunday Times* (1885-1930). Competition came from *Truth* (from 1890, later named the *Sunday Mirror* 1958-1977, then *Sunday* until 1979), the *Sunday Sun* (from 1903, since 1953 the *Sun-Herald*), the *Sunday News* (1919-1930, published by the *Evening News*), and the *Sunday Pictorial* 1920-1931). The *Sunday Telegraph* dates from November 1939 and was an immediate success. The *SMH* did not enter this field until 1949 when it established the *Sunday Herald*, a seventh-day counterpart of the *SMH*.

In 1953 Fairfax outbid Sir Frank Packer to buy Associated Newspapers. The motive of both publishers was to keep the Melbourne-based Herald and Weekly Times from entering the Sydney market. (Then Australia's largest newspaper company, it had a presence throughout Australia except Sydney.) The economics were compelling as the same printing presses and distribution infrastructure could be used both morning and afternoon. Almost immediately, the *Sunday Herald* was amalgamated with the *Sunday Sun* to become the *Sun-Herald*. The *Sun* was a long established newspaper published under that title since July 1910, and before that as the *Australian Star* since 1887. (Newspaper histories often repeat each other in claiming the Sydney *Sun* was the first Australian metropolitan newspaper with front-page news. This is not true – the first was the Melbourne *Herald*.) The *Sun* and the *Evening News* were long-time competitors until the latter's closure in 1931. Following the decision of Ezra Norton, publisher of the weekly *Truth*, to begin publication of an afternoon paper, the *Daily Mirror*, from 1941, afternoon competition returned. The competition between the



*Sun* and *Mirror* was for a long-time an entertaining but hardly elevating feature of Sydney life. The two newspapers competed vigorously in news coverage. But most people remember them more for huge and ambiguous headlines, bingo giveaways, spot-the-ball and other competitions. And, of course, the Page 3 girls.

One of the strangest events in Australian corporate history occurred in 1958 when the Fairfaxes bought the *Daily Mirror*, but then attempted to keep this secret! This has never been explained, but may have been because they were worried at the reaction if it was known that they had an afternoon monopoly, or it may have been because they were ashamed that the august Fairfax company was controlling not one, but two sensational, downmarket papers. But even stranger events were to come! Rather than merge the *Mirror* into the *Sun*, in 1960 they sold the *Mirror* to Rupert Murdoch (well, managing director Rupert Henderson did, while Sir Warwick Fairfax was overseas), thus giving him the entry to the Sydney daily market and giving him the biggest building block of his Australian newspaper empire. (Rupert Murdoch is the son of Sir Keith Murdoch, who built the Herald and Weekly Times group, owned only the *Courier-Mail*, the *Adelaide News* and the *Barrier Miner*, Broken Hill, when he died. The estate soon sold the *Courier-Mail* to the Herald and Weekly Times to settle debts.)

The *Telegraph* was now making large losses. Sir Frank Packer reluctantly sold the goodwill of the daily and Sunday titles on 4 June 1972 to Rupert Murdoch's News Limited, which was thus enabled to

print both the morning *Telegraph* and afternoon *Mirror* on its *Mirror* presses. Murdoch incorporated his *Sunday Australian* into the *Sunday Telegraph* immediately.

National newspapers are now available. The *Australian Financial Review* began in 1951 as a weekly. Fairfax established it and it has been a daily since 1963. News Limited's *Australian* began in July 1964. Facsimile transmission of pages makes it possible for the national newspapers to be printed in the various capitals. They are excellent for a national focus, but in each city have a relatively small circulation compared with the home dailies.

### **Trouble among the Fairfaxes**

The 1980s were tumultuous times for the Fairfax company and the Fairfax family. To be able to raise additional capital, the traditional family company had been converted into a public company in 1956. On 31 August 1987, Warwick Fairfax, great-great-grandson of the founder, launched a daring bid for the company's shares to return it to a private company. The huge debt necessary for this would have been difficult to manage in any circumstances and sale of non-core assets was always anticipated to finance the takeover. However, the Wall Street crash of October 1987, made the situation worse. Although assets were very widely closed or divested, the debt was unsustainable. The flamboyant Canadian publisher Conrad Black gained control, but became frustrated by Federal broadcasting legislation restricting foreign ownership and sold out, returning Fairfax to a public company in 1992. Today it has a wide group of shareholders. This means that no one group is

dominant, but it also means that the company is susceptible to a takeover attempt.

One result of the “young Warwick” events was that the company could no longer sustain the losses of the afternoon *Sun*, and closed it on 14 March 1988 after having closed, the previous day, the *Times on Sunday* (formerly the *National Times*, a weekly paper that had often embarrassed Fairfax by its forthright disclosures). By the 1970s evening papers, anyway, were in trouble worldwide. The arrival of television in 1956 began the decline and the advent of colour television in March 1975 hastened the decline. We learned to rely on television for our evening news and entertainment. Another problem was the rise of private motoring and relative decrease of public transport use. We have not yet learned how to read a newspaper and simultaneously drive. The *Daily Mirror* did not last much longer – until 5 October 1990.

### **More changes**

During the 1980s and 1990s great changes took place in the production of newspapers. The first was not readily apparent but highly important to newspaper economics. Hot metal printing using lead type set by skilled typographers was replaced by cold offset printing. Secondly journalists and advertising takers could now set their material directly from their computer terminals, removing the need for typesetters. Then there is the change most apparent to newspaper consumers: colour printing. We now see photographs and features in living colour. However, the true benefit is to the proprietors and advertisers with the financial rewards that colour ads bring.

Meanwhile, newspapers have to adapt to a new challenges, providing news and entertainment - the internet. The result is that newspapers are enhancing their strength in providing background information. We see the growth of “lifestyle” sections and supplements. In modern newspapers these are sometimes bigger than the news section. The rationale is to try to provide over a week something of interest to every reader – and thus to attract every category of advertiser.

Some of the *SMH*'s content now would scandalise a nineteenth-century editor or reader. During the 1943 Federal election it cautiously advocated a vote for “the best candidate”, irrespective of party. In 1961 it was bolder, for the first time urging a vote for the Labor Party. Recently, its editorials have been no longer predictably on the conservative side. Its content, with forthright articles about society and sex, is sometimes indistinguishable from other publications with racier reputations. For example, an article on the main features page in September 2002 about the latest fashions in pubic hair styling.

In late 1995/early 1996 both News Ltd and Fairfax moved printing of their publications to large new facilities in Chullora. This followed the move of Fairfax's editorial offices to Darling Park. News Ltd's editorial section is in Holt Street, Surry Hills.

The *Daily Telegraph*'s circulation overtook the *SMH* in the 1950s. According to the most audited figures (July-December 2002), the *Telegraph* sells 409,493 daily on Mondays to Fridays and the *SMH* 222,000.

However, on Saturdays the *SMH* at 386,500 outsells the *Telegraph* on 341,224. On Sundays, the *Sunday Telegraph* (731,366) has been widening its lead over the *Sun-Herald* (550,000) for some time.

## Reference guide

### Some firsts and lasts

5 March 1803	Australia's first newspaper, the <b>Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser</b> , established.
14 October 1824	<b>Australian</b> ( <i>not</i> the current newspaper of this title) begins
18 April 1831	The <b>Sydney Herald</b> , established as a weekly.
17 May 1832	<b>Sydney Herald</b> becomes bi-weekly.
1 January 1835	<b>Colonist</b> begins
2 July 1838	<b>Sydney Herald</b> becomes a tri-weekly.
1 October 1840	<b>Sydney Herald</b> becomes a daily.
8 February 1841	John Fairfax and Charles Kemp buy <b>Sydney Herald</b> from Frederick Stokes.
1 August 1842	<b>Sydney Herald</b> changes name to <b>Sydney Morning Herald</b> .
20 October 1842	<b>Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser</b> ceases.
28 September 1848	<b>Australian</b> ceases. <b>Sydney Morning Herald</b> thus becomes oldest newspaper in colony and has remained so.

October 1848	Sydney's first afternoon paper, the <b>Daily News and Evening Chronicle</b> , begins but lasts only two months.
28 December 1850 1853	<b>Empire</b> begins. <b>Sydney Morning Herald</b> first Australian newspaper to install a steam printing press.
28 August 1858	<b>Empire</b> ceases.
23 May 1859	<b>Empire</b> resumes.
7 July 1860	<b>Sydney Mail</b> (weekly edition of <i>SMH</i> ) begins.
29 July 1867	<b>Evening News</b> begins.
8 January 1870	<b>Australian Town and Country Journal</b> begins.
14 February 1875	<b>Empire</b> ceases.
16 June 1877	Death of John Fairfax.
1 July 1879	<b>Daily Telegraph</b> begins.
December 1887	<b>Australian Star</b> (afternoon) begins.
22 July 1893 1894	<b>Echo</b> ceases. <b>Daily Telegraph</b> becomes first Australian newspaper to introduce Linotypes.
1903	<b>Sydney Morning Herald</b> installs Linotypes.
21 August 1908	<b>Sydney Morning Herald</b> publishes its first photographs.
July 1910	<b>Sun</b> replaces the <b>Star</b> .
25 June 1919	<b>Australian Town and Country Journal</b> ceases.
6 January 1922	<b>Labor Daily</b> begins (first few weeks as <b>Daily Mail</b> ).
2 July 1923	<b>Daily Guardian</b> begins.

15 February 1931	<b>Daily Guardian</b> ceases.
21 March 1931	<b>Evening News</b> ceases.
December 1938	<b>Labor Daily</b> becomes the <b>Daily News</b> .
28 December 1938	<b>Sydney Mail</b> ceases.
12 May 1941	<b>Daily Mirror</b> begins.
26 July 1941	<b>Daily News</b> incorporated into the <b>Daily Telegraph</b> .
15 April 1944	First front page news in the <b>Sydney Morning Herald</b> .
21 January 1949	<b>Sunday Herald</b> begins.
16 August 1951	<b>Australian Financial Review</b> begins as a weekly.
4 October 1953	<b>Sunday Herald</b> and <b>Sunday Sun</b> cease.
11 October 1953	The <b>Sun-Herald</b> begins.
9 April 1956	John Fairfax Ltd established as a public company.
30 May 1960	News Limited enters Sydney daily market with acquisition of <b>Daily Mirror</b> .
21 October 1963	<b>Australian Financial Review</b> becomes a daily.
15 July 1964	The <b>Australian</b> (national daily) begins.
4 June 1972	News Limited acquires <b>Daily Telegraph</b> .
Late 1970s	Visual display terminals and computer typesetting gradually brought into use.
31 August 1987	Warwick Fairfax launches his bid to buy Fairfax company shares.
14 March 1988	<b>Sun</b> ceases.



8 October 1990	<b>Daily Mirror</b> merged into the <b>Daily Telegraph</b> – end of afternoon newspapers in Sydney.
Early 1990s	Colour printing introduced.
10 December 1990	John Fairfax Limited placed in receivership.
16 December 1991	John Fairfax Limited acquired by Tourang consortium.
8 May 1992	John Fairfax Limited returns to being a public company.

### Checklist of Sydney newspapers

#### Early nineteenth century:

*Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* 5 March 1803 – 20 October 1842

*Australian* (**not** the current newspaper with the same title) 14 October 1824 – 28 September 1848

*Monitor*, later *Sydney Monitor* 19 May 1826 – 29 December 1841

*Gleaner* April 1827 – 29 September 1827.

*Colonist* 1 January 1835 – 31 December 1840.

*Commercial Journal and Advertiser* 13 August 1835 – 1 November 1845?

#### Morning:

*Sydney Herald*, later *Sydney Morning Herald* 18 April 1831 – to date (daily since 1 October 1840)

*Empire* 28 December 1850 – 28 August 1858; and 23 May 1859 – 14 February 1875

*Daily Telegraph*, later *Daily Telegraph News Pictorial*, later *Daily Telegraph Pictorial*, later *Daily Pictorial*, later *Telegraph*, later *Daily Telegraph*

again, later *Daily Telegraph Mirror*, later *Daily Telegraph* again 1 July 1879 – to date  
*Daily Guardian* 2 July 1923 – 15 February 1931  
*Daily Mail*, later *Labor Daily*, later *Daily News* 6 January 1922 – 26 July 1941

Afternoon:

*Daily News and Evening Chronicle* 2 October 1848 – 29 November 1848  
*Sydney Evening Mail* 7 February 1859 – 18 May 1859  
*Evening News* 29 July 1867 - 21 March 1931  
*Afternoon Telegraph* 3 January 1870 – 30 April 1870  
*Echo* May 1875 – 22 July 1893  
*Globe* 16 November 1885 – 21 June 1887  
*Australian Star*, later *Star* December 1887 – June 1910  
*Sun* July 1910 – 14 March 1989  
*Daily Mirror* 12 May 1941 – 8 October 1990

Sunday:

*Sunday Times* 15 November 1885 – June 1930  
*Truth* later *Sunday Mirror*, later *Sunday* 3 August 1890 – April 1977  
*Sunday Sun* 5 April 1903 – 4 October 1953  
*Sunday Herald* 23 January 1949 – 4 October 1953  
*Sun-Herald* 11 October 1953 – to date  
*Sunday Telegraph* 19 November 1939 – to date

National:

*Australian Financial Review* 16 August 1951 – to date (daily since 21 October 1963)  
*Australian* 15 July 1964 – to date  
*National Times*, later *Times on Sunday* 8 February 1971 – 12 March 1989  
*Sunday Australian* 28 February 1971 – 4 June 1972

Weekly:

*John Bull* April 1843

*Weekly Register* July 1843 – December 1845

*Dispatch* November 1843 – December 1844

*Star and Working Man's Guardian* 16 March 1844 – October 1844

*Bee* October 1844 – December 1844

*Atlas* November 1844 – December 1848

*Citizen* August 1846 – April 1847

*People's Advocate* December 1848 – mid 1856

*Sydney Mail* 7 July 1860 – 28 December 1938

*Australian Town and Country Journal* 8 January 1870 – 25 June 1919

*Bulletin* 31 January 1880 – to date

*World's News* 21 December 1901 – December 1957

*Smith's Weekly* 1 March 1919 – 28 October 1950

Shipping:

*Daily Commercial News*, later *Lloyds's List DCN* 13 April 1891 – to date

## **More information**

The **Australian Newspaper History Group** consists of people interested in the history of newspapers, who appreciate the value of newspapers for the history they provide, who want to know about current developments, or who have worked in the industry. It publishes a lively twenty page Newsletter five times a year that covers both current developments and historical items. It is free via email. Email the editor, Rod Kirkpatrick, at [r.kirkpatrick@mailbox.uq.edu.au](mailto:r.kirkpatrick@mailbox.uq.edu.au). For hard copy, send him a cheque for \$20, made

payable to R. Kirkpatrick (ANHG), to 13 Sumac Street, Middle Park Qld 4074.

The **State Library of New South Wales** has a strong newspaper reference library that provides a comprehensive coverage of NSW newspapers – historical and current. It also has leading interstate and overseas papers. Opening hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 9pm, Saturday and Sunday 11am to 5pm. The library's website is [www.sl.nsw.nsw.gov.au](http://www.sl.nsw.nsw.gov.au)

The Newspaper Room of the **National Library of Australia**, Parkes Place, Canberra, has a comprehensive collection of all Australian newspapers. It is open Mondays to Thursdays 9am to 9pm, Fridays and Saturdays 9am to 5pm. More information is at [www.nla.gov.au](http://www.nla.gov.au)

## More reading

Two excellent books provide comprehensive histories of Sydney newspapers to 1945:

Walker, R.B., *The Newspaper Press in New South Wales 1803-1920*. Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1976.

Walker, R.B., *Yesterday's News: A History of the Newspaper Press in New South Wales from 1920 to 1945*. Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1980.

A brief history of the *Sydney Gazette* aimed at young readers is:

Erds, Renée, *The Sydney Gazette 1803-1842: Australia's First Newspaper*. Longmans, 1961.

Two significant articles about the *Sydney Gazette*, written to mark its sesqui-centenary, are:

Ellis, M.H., "The Australian press is born", *The Bulletin*, 21 January 1953, p.25.

Jones, Phyllis Mander, "Australia's first newspaper", *Meanjin*, 12 (1), Autumn 1953, pp.35-46.

Clem Lloyd has provided a broad-sweep introduction to the first 50 years of the press in Australia in the following:

"British press traditions, colonial governors, and the struggle for a 'free' press", in Ann Curthoys and Julianne Schultz (eds.), *Journalism: Print, Politics and Popular Culture*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1999, pp.10-19.

A number of comprehensive books provide a great deal of detail about the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the Fairfaxes (family and company):

*A Century of Journalism: The Sydney Morning Herald and its record of Australian Life 1831-1931*, John Fairfax and Sons Ltd, 1931.

*Centenary Supplement* published in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 April 1931.

Carroll, V.J., *The Man Who Couldn't Wait*. Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1990.

Fairfax, James, *My Regards to Broadway: A Memoir*. Angus & Robertson, 1991. A candid inside account.

Fairfax, J.F., *The Story of John Fairfax*. Sydney: John Fairfax and Sons Ltd, 1941.

Keper, L.V. (ed.), *The Sydney Morning Herald: History as it happened: 150 years of news and pictures from our oldest newspaper*. Nelson, 1981.

Ryan, Colleen, and Burge, Glenn, *Corporate Cannibals: The Taking of Fairfax*. Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1992.

Souter, Gavin, *Company of Heralds: A century and a half of Australian publishing by John Fairfax Limited and its predecessors 1831-1981*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1981. A comprehensive history.

Souter, Gavin, *Heralds and Angels: The House of Fairfax 1841-1990*. Melbourne University Press, 1991. Souter brings his earlier book up-date with the events of the 1980s.

Sykes, Trevor, *Operation Dynasty: How Warwick took Fairfax Ltd.* Melbourne: Greenhouse Publications, 1989.

Books about Consolidated Press and biographies of Sir Frank Packer and Kerry Packer provide details about the *Daily Telegraph*, *Sunday Telegraph* and the *Australian Women's Weekly*:

Barry, Paul, *The rise and rise of Kerry Packer*, Bantam and ABC Books, 1993.

Griffen-Foley, Bridget, *The House of Packer: The making of a media empire*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999.

Griffen-Foley, Bridget, *Sir Frank Packer: The Young Master*. Sydney: HarperBusiness, 2000.

Whittington, R.S., *Sir Frank: the Frank Packer story*, Cassell Australia, 1971.

For *SMH & Daily Telegraph* in the late nineteenth century see:

*NSW Legislative Assembly Committee of Inquiry into Newspaper Trains 1902*, NSW Parliamentary Papers 1902.

There are a number of books about Rupert Murdoch which include details of his takeover of the *Daily Mirror*:

Leapman, M., *Barefaced cheek: the apotheosis of Rupert Murdoch*. Hodder & Stoughton, 1983.

Munster, George, *Rupert Murdoch: a paper prince*, Viking, 1984.

Regan, Simon, *Rupert Murdoch: a business biography*. Angus & Robertson, 1976.

Shawcross, William, *Murdoch*. Pan Books, 1993.

Biographies of prominent Sydney newspaper people appear in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne University Press:

Bennett, Samuel (*Evening News, Empire, Town & Country Journal*), Vol.3

Denison, Sir Hugh (*Star, Sun, Guardian*), Vol. 8

Garran, Andrew (*Sydney Morning Herald*), Vol. 4

Fairfax, John (*SMH*), Vol. 4

Fairfax, Sir James Reading and Sir James Oswald (*SMH*), Vol. 8

Fairfax, John Fitzgerald (*SMH*), Vol.14

Fairfax, Mary (*SMH*), Vol. 14

Howe, George and Robert (*Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser*), Vol. 1

Kemp, Charles (*SMH*) Vol. 2

Lang, John Dunmore (*Colonist*), Vol. 2

Packer, Robert Clyde (*Smith's Weekly, Guardian, Women's Weekly*), Vol. 11

Packer, Sir Frank (*Guardian, Women's Weekly, Telegraph*), Vol. 15

Parkes, Sir Henry (*Empire*), Vol. 5

Theodore, Edward (*Women's Weekly*), Vol. 12

West, John (*SMH*), Vol. 2.

Biographies and memoirs of, or about, former Sydney journalists include:

Baume, Eric, *I Lived These Years*. London: George G. Harrap, 1941.

Blaikie, George, *Remember Smith's Weekly?* Adelaide: Rigby, 1966.

Brodsky, Isadore, *The Sydney Press Gang*. Sydney: Old Sydney Free Press, 1974.

Buttrose, Ita, *A Passionate Life: Ita Buttrose*. Melbourne: Penguin, 2001.

Cannon, Michael, *That Damned Democrat: John Norton, an Australian Populist*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1981.

Cockerill, George, *Scribblers and Statesmen*. Melbourne: printed by Roy Stevens, 1943.

Lawson, Sylvia, *The Archibald Paradox: A strange Case of Authorship*. Melbourne: Allen Lanes, 1983.

Mead, Tom, *Breaking The News*. Sydney: Dolphin Books, 1998.

Myers, Hal, *The Whispering Gallery*. Kangaroo Press, 1999.

McNicoll, David, *Luck's A Fortune*. Sydney: Wild Cat Press, 1979.

Manning, G. *Larger than Life – the Story of Eric Baume*, 1967.

Pringle, J.D., *Have Pen: Will Travel*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1973.

Books about the media generally include references to Sydney newspapers:

Chadwick, Paul, *Media Mates: Carving Up Australia's Media*. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1989.

Cunningham, Stuart, and Turner, Graeme, *The Media and Communications in Australia*. Allen & Unwin, 2002.

Goot, Murray, *Newspaper Circulation in Australia 1932-1977*. Melbourne: La Trobe University, 1979.

Gordon, Harry, *An Eyewitness History of Australia*. Adelaide: Rigby, 1976.

Hagan, James, *Printers and Politics: A History of the Australian Printing Unions 1850-1950*. Canberra: ANU Press, 1966.

Lloyd, Clem, *Parliament and the Press*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988.

Lloyd, Clem, *Profession: Journalist*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1985.

Windschuttle, Keith, *The Media*. Melbourne: Penguin Australia, 1985.

Two books provide excellent overviews of the Australian newspaper scene in the 1950s-60s (and



Mayer provides a potted history of the Australian press thus far):

Mayer, Henry, *The Press in Australia*. Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1964. [See also his separately circulated typescript, "Bibliographical notes on the press in Australia and related subjects", available in major public libraries.]

Sprague Holden, William, *Australia Goes to Press*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1961.

The following two volumes contain excellent summaries of and observations on the development of newspapers in Australia to the end of the 1950s:

Green, H.M., *A History of Australian Literature*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1961, Vols I and II. See: Vol. I, chs. 5, 8, 10, 13, 15, 20; Vol. II, Chs. 15 and 21.

Volumes of facsimiles provide fascinating views of past newspapers:

*Famous Front Pages in Modern Australian History*. Melbourne: Heritage Publications, 1973 (mainly Melbourne examples).

*News News News: 101 Years of Australian Newspapers*. Sunshine Books, 1982. [Second edition expected early 2003.]

*160 years of The Sydney Morning Herald: Major News Stories 1831-1990*. Sydney: John Fairfax Group, 1990.

*Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser facsimile reproductions*, volumes 1 to 8 covering 1803 to 1810, published by the Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales in association with Angus and Robertson, 1963 to 1970, and volume 9 covering 1811, published by the Roebuck Society, Canberra, 1973.

Van Oudtshoorn, Nic, *A Newspaper History of Australia*. Rigby, 1982.

Wright, Christopher, *Over One Hundred and Fifteen Years of News From The Daily Telegraph Mirror*. Adrian Savvas, 1995.

A general introduction to the colonial press in Australia is found in:

Bonwick, James, *Early Struggles of the Australian Press*, London: Gordon & Gotch, 1890.

For a history of the New South Wales non-metropolitan press, see:

Kirkpatrick, Rod, *Country Conscience: A History of the New South Wales Provincial Press, 1841-1995*. Canberra: Infinite Harvest, 2000.

A useful but outdated guide to newspaper holdings in major libraries is:

*Newspapers in Australian Libraries: A Union List, Part 2: Australian Newspapers*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1985.

[The best guides to the newspaper holdings in major public libraries now are the catalogues accessible through each library's website.]

## **The authors**

**Victor Isaacs**, of Canberra, has interests in railway, newspaper and political history. He is the founder of the Australian Newspaper History Group.

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