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## 2008 Andrew Olle Media Lecture - Ray Martin

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### 2008 Olle Media Lecture

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Ray Martin, one of the most recognised and respected faces in Australian journalism, will deliver the 2008 annual 702 ABC Sydney Andrew Olle Media Lecture.

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Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

I thank you for coming tonight and supporting The Andrew Olle Lectures.

I notice a few old mates have also turned up. Some of them are the sort of knockabout journos who'd rather go the dentist, or a butterfly exhibition, than attend a lecture. I'm humbled that you've come along. I'll do my best NOT to make it 'an ordeal by oratory.' But, I can't promise.

I guess what I want to say tonight IS more directly aimed at television. That's probably to be expected, seeing that I've only ever worked as a journalist at the ABC and Channel 9 - except for a lot of free-lance pieces, over many years, for newspapers and magazines.

Tonight, ladies and gentlemen, I want to suggest to you that commercial television - where most Australians *used* to get their news and information - has 'dropped the ball'. Even more disturbing, I think it's showing serious signs of 'pulling out of the main news game'. I think what we need - desperately - is to find some new models of those ruthless, old privateers we used to sneeringly call 'media moguls'.

I know. I know. Over the decades most of us have spent an hour - or ten million - bagging them, in times of trouble and strife. Usually in a pub, after a bit of lubrication.

My opinion is this. We need owners again with a genuine passion for the business. Owners who understand the value of news, not just profits. That's obviously not just in television, either. That's what I'd like to talk about tonight.

But let me first say, I'm very honoured to be asked to deliver this Andrew Olle Lecture. I'm conscious of the calibre of those who have spoken here before. We're here tonight in recognition of a rare television and radio man. It's a tribute to Andrew Olle's talents and basic decency. And a tribute to the high journalistic qualities and ethics that he believed in.

I would especially like to welcome Annette Olle and daughter Nina. Would you please welcome them?

In the interests of reconciliation, I would also like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land on which we meet tonight - the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation.

I pay my deep respects to their Elders and to their Ancestors.

It's good to be back, even for a flying visit, at my alma mater. The ABC was where I kicked off my peregrinations in 1965. I enjoyed a fantastic thirteen years here, including almost a decade as an ABC foreign correspondent.

I can't believe my stint at the Nine Network has now been thirty years - almost to the day. I must confess that I've loved every mad minute of it, too. I've had the privilege of going to extraordinary out-of-the way places - with a cavalcade of astonishing people.

I've got to 'fess up. Sometimes, it felt wrong to take big Kezza's money. But, after a panadol and 'a lie-down' that silly feeling always went away! Working for the Packers - and, sometimes-outrageous bosses like Sam Chisholm, David Leckie, Bruce Gyngell and David Gyngell has never been boring.

I think they're the kind of 'larger-than-life' characters who are just asking to have a musical comedy written about them. Or a tragedy.

I was actually based in New York as the ABC's North American Correspondent when I left to join Channel 9. Talbot Duckmanton - before he became Sir Talbot - was Mark Scott's most illustrious predecessor. Duckers had sent me off to the Big Apple in 1969. After almost ten years, he said I could stay on there ' indefinitely '.

So, when I had to tell him I was leaving to join this brand, new show on the Packer network - called 60 Minutes - Duckers took it pretty well. I don't think he quite 'congratulated' me. But, he puffed on his eternally - dry, Meerschaum pipe and said...a bit sagely... "We *all* get offers from commercial television".

He never did reveal when he last got 'an offer' from commercial TV. But, he did say, wearing his erudition lightly, 'when the winds start blowing a bit cold, people usually come home to the warmth of the ABC'.

Well. Here I am back at the ABC, putting another log on the commercial fire.

Thank you, Managing Director Mark Scott, for inviting me here tonight.

And Mark, I don't know whether you had the chance to watch CNN's coverage of the American Presidential and Vice Presidential debates, did you?

Well. Stop the presses. CNN have stolen *The Worm*! They've pinched it.

I can only imagine how upset Glen Milne and the National Press Club must be. Not to mention John Howard and the Liberal Party. They'll be apoplectic.

I have to say the CNN worm was nowhere near as 'classy' - or as 'provocative' - as John Westacott's loveable, little invertebrate on Channel 9.

Whatsmore, CNN gave 'Westy' no credit and certainly no cash - for coming up with such a TV brainwave. Visions of Les Darcy and Phar Lap, immediately come to mind.

Can I just say, Mark, I'm now more convinced than ever - that like the Internet Revolution - we have to accept 'The Worm' has become a worldwide, election phenomenon. There won't be a debate in future - anywhere - without Westy's Worm.

So, is the ABC big enough - or enterprising enough -to join CNN and the world -and, give Kerry O'Brien one for 2010? The Worm, as they say, is in your court.

Moving on to tonight's topic.

It's clear that 2008 has been, what the Queen might call, 'the annus horribulus' - for the news business - both here and overseas. Sackings and forced redundancies. Newspapers closing and TV programs dumped.

Yet, I think we'd all agree that the ABC with innovative, serious journalism - obviously backed by management - has had an exceptionally prosperous year. (It's amazing what you can do when you don't have to worry about advertising cut-backs. Or 'crushing' interest debts.) Nevertheless. If you check the ratings, there's a crystal clear message - if commercial programme chiefs bother to look.

If Tony Jones' new Q and A program at 9.30pm on Thursday nights, even with politicians on the panel, can beat The Footy Show, well, who knows?

I should also give SBS a tick for its news programs. And Sky News, which has become a powerhouse in live news events. If not in ratings, then certainly in its news presence.

By comparison, I'm sorry to say, the three commercial networks have gone AWOL -when it comes to journalism. Out to Lunch. Except for the excellent nightly bulletins, the redoubtable 60 Minutes and, every so-often, the much-maligned 6.30 nightly current-affairs shows.

That's all there is on a regular basis!

The American newscaster, Dan Rather, once said 'TV Networks are like super-tankers. Once they head off in a certain direction it's hard to turn them around again.'

I mention this because there was a time - not so long ago - when Channel Nine had become 'the National Broadcaster' although such a suggestion used to 'cheese-off' the ABC.

- Nine had the Great Debates and were big winners on election nights, Federal and State.
- News Specials were regular, if not common, in those days.
- When 9/11 happened Australia turned to Channel 9 news.
- And 'hang the expense'.
- Covering the Asian tsunami, as a news event, cost Kerry Packer three million precious dollars.

Kerry wrote - what was for him - a rare 'hero-gram' to the two blokes who spent all his money. David Gyngell and the news boss at the time, Max Uetchritz. He told them how proud he was of Nine's news coverage. He never mentioned the three million. Would that happen today? I hope it would.

I earlier mentioned the American Presidential election. The television coverage and the use of the so-called 'new media' has been remarkable. It's been a revelation - of how far our Australian networks are lagging behind the Americans in adapting to 'the on-line revolution'.

Let me offer one quick example.

On CNN, viewers were 'encouraged' to watch the debates on the television - with their laptops. To interact with the live coverage, in a dozen different ways - from streaming news stories and profiles of candidates, to blogging and chat rooms. The idea was to play with your laptop, give your opinion and get directly involved while you watch CNN -during the debate and for hours afterwards.

Television is no longer a window on the world - it's now a mirror.

Incidentally, Max Uetchritz, who now runs Nine MSN News, cites Australian surveys which reveal more than half of our viewers also regularly watch TV with a computer on their lap.

The big difference is WE don't give them anything to do which *connects* them to our news programs.

By way of contrast, the American networks are NOT waiting for the audience to come to them. They're going after the audience - feverishly.

In fact, the boss of CBS said recently: 'CBS is no longer a television company. No longer a radio company. It's not an on-line company. It's an *audience* company.' An 'audience' company.

The best newspapers are counter-punching much more effectively.

The New York Times, for example, has become 'ubiquitous'- on the web and the mobile. As well as its newspaper network. You log onto NYT dot com and, let's say, press 'Humour.'

That gives you all the television nightly talk show jokes about the Presidential election. Or 'Saturday Night Live' skits. And Emmy-award winning political comedy like The John Stewart Show and the Colbert Report. Heaps more.

They've got nothing to do with newspapers. But, everything to do with audiences. The internet now

brings the New York Times 300 million dollars a year, 10 percent of the company's revenue. It's growing at an astonishing rate.

We all know that Australians are confirmed 'junkies'- when it comes to 'new tech toys'. But our 'internet cravings' are simply not being satisfied.

Young Australians love - and live with - music. It's an integral part of their daily lives. On their i-pods, their mobiles, their mp3's and in the car. So, where's the music on prime time television? There isn't any. Not even music videos 'to stream'.

Where are the innovative I.T shows for young Australians? Same answer.

How's that for breeding a new generation of TV viewers? So far there's been little attempt to 'connect' with them. That has to change. Within a few years everything will be mobile.

The Australian TV networks' integration still muddles along - without vision or publicity, without equipment or serious financial backing. On the proverbial 'smell of an oily rag.'

Despite such deficiencies Nine MSN now streams eleven million videos a month.

Finance Guru Ross Greenwood's live coverage of the RBA's recent one per cent rate cut got almost as many hits on the website, as it had Channel 9 viewers.

We need vision. We need innovation. And we certainly need investment. What we're getting instead is 'benign neglect.' Benign neglect on-line and on-television.

Faced with today's internet reality I think Kerry Packer would have finally agreed. But Kerry's not around.

It was AJ Liebling who famously said 'Freedom of the press only *really* belongs to those who *own* the press.' He was right.

So, I never imagined I'd be uttering this next suggestion. It seems we journalists have to start a campaign to find some new 'media moguls'. And 'PRESERVE' the only 'old' ONE we have left. Even if he is an American.

I admit, these are desperate measures - for desperate times.

Most of us here tonight can remember when we were appalled to see Rupert Murdoch - or any single newspaper company - control 70 per cent of Australian newspapers.

It seemed a dangerous monopoly of our business. Still is.

I hate to say it, but it's turned out to be almost a good thing. By comparison with so much of the Australian news media, right now, the News Ltd stable is alive and robust.

Love 'em or loath 'em, the legendary moguls- from the Hearsts through the Beaverbrooks to the Packers and all the rest of them - even the 'mini moguls' the Mark Days and the Eric Beechers in more recent times - love the business of journalism. They also clearly understood it. They breathed it like oxygen.

Some of them even cared about the craft.

As Rupert Murdoch still does. Like the song says 'Still crazy, after all these years.' I remember, back in 1975, when the Whitlam government was imploding - disintegrating - I was in New York with the ABC and Mr. Murdoch was beginning his 'conquest of America.'

I rang him asking for an interview for a 4 Corners story. He said 'No'. I'd been filing stories for ABC News - about a couple of American financial shysters who were tied-up in the notorious Khemlani money-laundering scandal - that finally brought down Gough's government.

Rupert said he would give me access to his bureaus and editors if I was willing to 'swap notes' on the American end of the Labor government's Middle Eastern shenanigans. I'd already sent my stories, so it seemed like a fair deal. It was late afternoon on St. Patrick's Day - I remember well - because the 'mogul' with his sleeves rolled up, taking lots of notes, kept ringing home and apologising to his waiting Irish dinner guests.

I had no idea, sitting in New York, how deeply involved Rupert was in *running* the editorial campaign, back home, to get rid of Gough Whitlam. I had unwittingly contributed to his efforts - in a tiny way.

So, it was amusing listening to John Hartigan here last year recounting how he was leading the journo's strike at News Ltd, over Rupert's ruthless interference with the Australian election - along with a couple of my mates who worked for 'The Oz' at the time.

I'm very much aware that in calling for some new, all-powerful, interfering 'media moguls' they do bring some baggage. We won't always agree with their methods or their madness. Not with what they 'try on' politically. And what they get away with.

"What I do with my money, son, is my business' Kerry used to shout "And what you do with my money, son, is my business, too.'

There's that other apocryphal tale about Packer ringing up Peter Meakin, to complain bitterly about some story. Meakin, who ran News and Current Affairs at Nine in those days, listened quietly and then said, 'Kerry, I hear what you're saying, but you are only *one* viewer'. Packer paused for a moment and softly replied, 'oh, really. I thought, son, I might have counted for at least *two* viewers'.

I have to say, in my 30 years at Nine I was never aware of any news story being dumped - or even being re/written - because someone feared a commercial sponsor's complaint.

Not even when - at 60 Minutes - we 'fingered' BHP for the Appin Coal Mine disaster. BHP, remember, was the major sponsor of 60 Minutes - to the tune of over five million dollars a year.

Mind you, Kerry Packer left you in 'no doubt' if he didn't like a story. You could hear him bellowing from Park Street, without a telephone. Kerry and I had, let's say, 'a disagreement' once about how a certain interview should be undertaken. 'Alright, son . Do it your way' he said. 'But, if it doesn't work, we'll have a different kind of conversation next time, won't we? '

Thankfully, we didn't have to.

Another time, I heard Packer instruct a couple of senior reporters - the *most* senior -who were grappling with the legal niceties of a story. 'You just get the bleeping story and let *me* worry about *my* bleeping court costs',he instructed them.

In the 'golden era', Sam Chisholm used to regularly boast about Nine having a sizeable, legal 'slush fund' - to defend good, investigative news stories.

Would any network today support that kind of pro-active, costly journalism. Again, I hope so.

In the mid 90's - after he'd recovered from his near-fatal heart attack - Kerry Packer agreed to a rare interview, on A Current Affair. I seem to recall he'd begun his latest crusade to buy Fairfax.

Just consider, where we might all be today if the Packers had been allowed to risk their considerable family fortune in buying Fairfax instead of casinos? Watching that interview again - for tonight's lecture - Kerry kept on demanding 'the right to buy a bigger slice of the Australian media pie' if he was going to stay in the media game. We know what happened.

Anyway, because of his near-fatal illness I asked the old man, whether he had thought about passing the reins to his son, James? He didn't beat around the bush with his answer.

"No, I have not" he snapped - saying - "One of the few beauties about being the owner is you can decide when you want to go. And, I'm going to go when I'm in the box. You can't retire."

Like Rupert, Kerry Packer obviously didn't *need* to keep on working for 'the weekly pay cheque.' Television made him a lot of money. He watched television endlessly and he was very good at it.

What today's media owners do, of course, is a perfectly legitimate and proper business enterprise. Many are only interested in building wealth...not in building value. Not in building the future and the culture of journalism. That's not their core business. They don't care about power either. Only about profits.

The old media moguls, as tough and ruthless and sometimes scandalous, as they were, gave our business passion. And soul. And substance. Along with longevity and jobs. There's no doubt *they* decided the news policies and parameters. They energized the media. They often picked the targets. Like a ship's captain, they set the course.

Who cares if today's media Board Members - or executives - have great experience in banking or the oil business? It means nothing if their London family runs a great shoe empire.

Even if they cared they wouldn't understand. It gets lost in translation.

When was the last time a Board Member walked into a TV studio, or a newsroom? How would they know a great story? How could they recognise what makes a natural cameraman or a brilliant tape editor? And how important such people are to corporate profits?

I'm reminded of that memorable line by the movie mogul, Sam Goldwyn. Asked what made him so successful in Hollywood he said 'I respect talent.' And he did.

So did Kerry Packer and Sam Chisholm and the others who understood. Alan Bond *once* famously said that he 'understood real estate, and banks and finance. But in television,' he said 'one plus one doesn't always equal two.' He was right. That's why Bondy got out.

Australia's *newest* richest man, Frank Lowry said the same thing in his biography - about his disastrous encounter with Channel Ten. Mr. Lowry *could not* get rid of the network quickly enough. He simply couldn't understand it.

Now television - like newspapers - is certainly about business. We all appreciate that. It's got to make money. But - as Bondy found out - it's about much more than that. It's about egos and imagination and creativity - and, they are *always* tricky and a bit ephemeral.

It's about unique brands and brand loyalty...to customers who feel they 'sort of own' the business. That it's an integral part of their lives. With television you come into their home, you sit in their lounge room. They laugh and they cry with you.

In a sense, it's the same with the best newspapers around Australia. The papers are a part of the heart-beat and soul of the city. The paper's a real part of 'the community.'

Gerald Stone could NOT have sold 100,000 copies of a book about "Who Killed BHP?" Or 'Who killed Woolies?' Who cares? But Australians DO care about television. And they certainly cared about Channel 9.

Which brings me to Kerry Stokes, whose network has now gazumped Nine. Kerry Stokes has impeccable qualifications to be a hands-on 'media mogul.' He's rich and he owns the Seven Network. He's shown in his battle with The West Australian newspaper that he loves a bit of power.

Interestingly, Mr. Stokes also gave the Andrew Olle Lecture back in 2001 - just after the September 11 disaster. It was an excellent, impassioned speech.

Seven years ago, Mr Stokes told us here 'the role of the media' is to make sure that all Australians are given the facts. To make sure 'they understand the issues.'

Mr. Stokes insisted that the media 'must be part of the answer' to Australia's political and social problems. He even suggested holding media debates.

Yet, if you look at his Number One network, all we regularly get from Seven, regularly I'm saying, is 'Today Tonight' and news bulletins.

I acknowledge they both win the ratings convincingly. Night after night. But, there's no red-blooded campaign to 'understand the issues', as Mr. Stokes put it. No sign that Mr. Stokes' media is 'part of the answer' to Australia's political and social issues.

Maybe that's about to happen. I certainly hope so. It's worth noting that in recent weeks - and somewhat surprisingly - the Seven Network has presented a couple of half-hour News Specials, on the economic meltdown. Seven have led the way. Good on them, too.

Those Specials have rated well. Hopefully, they'll encourage more such journalistic endeavours, because the cupboard's been dreadfully bare.

My comments are not meant as a criticism of the commercial news bulletins. On the contrary. They are all consistently good. The journalists who run tv news shows - including A Current Affair and TT - could run newspapers. Some of them have. There's no question about their ability or experience. The best TV reporters -like Laurie Oakes, Peter Harvey and Liz Hayes - would embellish the best newspapers. Some, like Laurie, already are.

TV journalists, I suggest, are *not* the problem. The problem is, as the great Walter Cronkite once pointed out a TV news bulletin has enough words to fill just three quarters of a newspaper page.

Three quarters of a page - plus pictures - to cover the local, national and international news of the day. In effect that means not much more than headlines - with pictures.

You can almost forget Channel Ten. It's just news bulletins and 'Meet the Press'. What ever happened to a network's 'public responsibility and duty' - as part of being granted a free-to-air licence?

Do Ten's Canadian corporate owners 'give a flying fig' about journalism? Do they foster public debate in Australia? Do they care whether Australians are given the facts and helped to understand the issues? They're rhetorical questions. We all know the answers.

One could ask the same questions of Bruce Gordon, the powerful owner of the WIN Network - which now has a potential audience of eight million viewers across Australia. Mr. Gordon is another man who's richly qualified for our Media Moguls Club. That's if he cares 'two bob' about journalism.

But, you have to ask who *really* cares today? Have a look at the recent scoreboard.

And, I'm focusing on Nine again, because Nine was the commercial network which used to have easily the strongest news programs. That's when Nine was 'Still the One'.

'Business Sunday' got the chop first. Given the state of the world right now, how prescient was that? Mind you. None of the commercial networks has a 'Money Show' anymore. Then 'Nightline' was flicked. Who needs a late-night news programme, at a time when Australians are getting home from work later and later? Let 'em watch the ABC or pay-tv. Or, thankfully Ten.

Saddest of all, the 'Sunday' programme was ingloriously dumped - despite picking up five Walkley Award nominations last year. Ross Coulthart's story on 'The Butcher of Bega' has to be one of the 'short-priced favourites' for the Gold Walkley this year.

I believe it was a dopey business decision to kill off 'Sunday'. Fix it don't bury it. It was a vital part of the cherished Nine 'brand' - until it lost both its budget and its biggest backer in Kerry Packer. How does 'a bean counter' put a price on 'brand'? Or brand loyalty? How do you put a price on quality? Whether it's 'The Sunday' program or 'The Bulletin' magazine?

Well, you can't - unless you know the business. At the 'Sunday' wake - which followed the emotional, final show - that doyen of news, Max Walsh, called it 'more than just another nail in the coffin of commercial current affairs.'

'This is the final switch to show biz' Max lamented. You've got to hope Max Walsh is wrong. He usually isn't. This crisis in TV is about much more than just losing some of the best news programs. It's also about losing some of the best news people.

Over the years The Andrew Olle speakers have agreed that the news business is all about content. And that now includes the insatiable Internet. *Content is King!*

In news that means quality, passionate, time-consuming journalism. The speakers also agreed that media organisations must invest heavily in news.

Well, that's not happening in commercial TV any more. To quote Lachlan Murdoch's 2002 Andrew Olle Lecture 'Good journalism is good business practice. Good business supports great journalism.' Who knows, maybe Lachlan Murdoch will one day pick up a cheap television station? You never can tell.

But, it makes you wonder who in 'today's media business' has been listening to all this free advice and accumulated wisdom from the Olle Lecture series. You can't have content without having an adequate number of journalists. You definitely can't have investigative journalism. And by 'journalists' I mean photographers and cameramen, subs and TV editors. And sound recordists. Not to mention reporters and producers.

How is it at a time when hundreds of journo's have being sacked or made redundant as necessary' cost cutting measures' - when circulation and ratings and advertising revenue and share prices are going through the basement floor -how is it executives still manage to give themselves multi-million dollar contracts? And huge bonuses?

How does that happen? 'Obscene' is a word that springs to mind. It's interesting that the Prime Minister this week has called for a reining-in of 'unrestrained executive greed.'

So, WHO do we need to 'get on-side' to restore the power of television news? Well, after the corporate owners - whom I suggest really couldn't care less - easily the most powerful men in commercial tv are the Programme Directors. And they are all men. Which is a media mystery in itself. After all, it's no trade secret that women control the home TV sets. Yet, a small bunch of blokes decide what women want to watch.

It's also NO SECRET that commercial TV Program chiefs have never liked news programs. Beyond the absolute bare, basic essentials - like a nightly news bulletin. They certainly don't believe that News Specials or debates - or any more current affairs shows - are the answer to their ratings' prayers. Well, I believe they're wrong.

Maybe Channel 7 will prove how wrong with their much-talked about Sunday night show, set to take on 60 Minutes. If it ever gets on air.

I sympathise with the program bosses. I really do. If it was easy to pick what Australians want to watch on TV, then every show would be a smash hit. But, when will commercial TV 'stop being scared'? When will they take some 'creative risks'?

What's happened to the unpredictable, the cheeky and the edgy that you find on the ABC and Pay-Television? Instead of copying cheap Japanese game shows and running two or three episodes of the same American sit-com night after night? It's easy to argue that viewers are being driven to the internet and away from commercial TV.

Ladies and gentlemen, my remarks tonight are not made in anger or bitterness. I love the TV business. It's a cris d'coeur - from the heart.

So, a last word - if I may - about the positive value of 'media moguls'?

In his outstanding speech here last year, John Hartigan talked about the 'very existence' of *The Australian* newspaper. John pointed out that it had long been a loss-maker for News Ltd. Until recent times. I think it's an excellent newspaper. But, it's still 'the runt' of the News litter - in terms of profits. But Rupert wanted *The Australian*. And he still wants it. So, that's why - for example - we get the most comprehensive and the most insightful coverage of indigenous affairs in the pages of *The Australian*.

I've spent over thirty years deeply involved with indigenous affairs. I well recall that generation of old newspaper editors and hacks - when I first started out - with the tedious, racist maxim that 'abo stories don't sell newspapers'. Or win ratings.

I know some veteran journo's still working who are still quietly preaching that nonsense. Well, go tell John Hartigan that.

He's one 'old newspaper hack' who has long campaigned for fair and honest reporting - warts and all - on reconciliation and a wide range of indigenous affairs. Go tell that to Nicholas Rothwell, who continues to turn out exquisitely written, sensitive and insightful pieces for The Oz - from the Territory. Along with Paul Toohey. As Michael Gawenda, the long-term editor of Melbourne's *Age* said the other night, in a public speech - 'Imagine Australia without a paper like *The Australian*'.

We still have it- thanks to one old media mogul.

Right now, Australian television needs to catch its breath. By stemming 'the bleeding' of audience numbers - which is happening at an alarming rate. People are getting their instant news from radio and the Internet. But, they'll still watch a well-compiled news bulletin later - as they do, in their millions, every night. As long as it stays relevant. Audiences want both.

So television must integrate - through the web, the mobile and anything else, which the unstoppable technology throws up.

Thirty years ago, when I left the ABC, I couldn't have imagined Australian commercial TV would just 'switch off' their news and current affairs shows. Well, imagine no more. That's pretty much what they've done. Would the last journo out, please turn off the studio lights?

Unless we can find a few NEW 'media moguls'. Or 'fire up' television managements - with passion - so they care once again about the true value of broadcast journalism. So they want a return to the pursuit of excellence. So, they want to still be in the business in 10 or 20 years time. Beyond next week.

Tim Long used to be the razor-sharp comedy writer for David Letterman in New York. He's now one of the executive producers of *The Simpsons*. Recently, Tim Long predicted:

'The television business could have the long-term viability of the Soviet Union. We could all wake up one morning and it's gone'.

Ladies and gentlemen, I think he was joking.

Thank you so much for listening.

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