
📌 CURRENT ISSUE — Volume 8 Issue 2 -2014

**‘Kick this mob out’: The Murdoch media and the Australian Labor
Government (2007 to 2013)**

Mitchell Hobbs
University of Sydney (Australia)

David McKnight
University of NSW (Australia)

Abstract

During the 2013 federal election in Australia, the role of Rupert Murdoch and his newspapers in the nation’s politics became a matter of major public controversy for the first time in some years. This accords with both popular belief and the academic literature that suggests Murdoch has a long history of political intervention through the use (or threatened use) of his media power in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia. This article examines the relationship between Rupert Murdoch and the Labor governments from 2007 to 2013. It describes the campaigning role of his newspapers in attacking key policies of the first Rudd government and the subsequent Gillard government. It then explores the front page headlines that influenced the tone of the 2013 election campaign and which saw the issue of media ownership and bias emerge as a topic of widespread discussion. Ultimately this article explores Murdoch’s motivations for campaigning against Kevin Rudd, including the claim that News Corporation stood to gain financially through the election of a Liberal–National coalition government.

Introduction

On Sunday 4 August 2013, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced that a federal election would be held on 7 September. The following day Sydney’s *Daily Telegraph*, a widely read tabloid and part of Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation ¹, published a striking front page dominated by the headline ‘Finally, you now have the chance to: KICK THIS MOB OUT’.



The Daily Telegraph, 5th August, 2013. Used with permission.

Even a fellow News Corp journalist admitted that the ferocity of the tabloid's headline 'stopped many in their tracks' (Leys, 2013). Elsewhere it was interpreted as confirmation that Rupert Murdoch and his news media would campaign for the defeat of the Labor government. Six weeks earlier Murdoch had made his attitude clear after Kevin Rudd won a leadership ballot against Julia Gillard. He had tweeted 'Australian public now totally disgusted with Labor Party wrecking country with it's [sic] sordid intrigues. Now for quick election'. Shortly before the beginning of the election campaign, he declared his support for the leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, tweeting 'Conviction politicians hard to find anywhere. Australia's Tony Abbott [a] rare exception. Opponent Rudd all over the place [and] convincing nobody'. Murdoch's looming media presence in the election campaign was also registered by his archrival in the Australian news market, Fairfax Media. A few days after Murdoch's 'conviction' tweet, Fairfax launched a sudden corporate re-branding based around the slogan 'Independent. Always.' In case this message was not clear, a Fairfax advertisement depicted two dictionary definitions of 'independent'. One was 'not governed by a foreign power'; the other was 'free from the control of another or others'. The first was an oblique reference to Murdoch's American citizenship and the US registration of his company News Corporation. The other referred to his reputation of intervening in his news media to campaign for his preferred political causes.

The 2013 election was remarkable in that media ownership and bias became an election issue for the first time in many decades. This occurred because Labor's leader, Kevin Rudd, repeatedly criticised Murdoch and thus made it a significant public issue. In this article we firstly examine the relationship between Rupert Murdoch's News Corp and the Labor governments of 2007-2013 and secondly explore the issue of media bias expressed by Rupert Murdoch's stable of tabloid newspapers during the 2013 election campaign. We define media bias as slanted coverage that frames an issue or event in a manner that clearly favours a particular perspective or political party (Hobbs, 2010, pp. 196-197). Taking *The Daily Telegraph's* controversial headline as our starting point, we examine the headlines of the Murdoch press during the five-week campaign. We take the placement of stories on the front page and the messages conveyed in headlines as a simple measure suggesting the stance of the newspaper. Our focus on front pages also reflects the way in which newspaper front pages act as public billboards, sometimes in a literal sense, with their message being displayed outside shops and newsagents.

Rupert Murdoch and politics

Murdoch's deep personal involvement with politics and his preparedness to use his news media to advance his views, occupies much of the popular and scholarly literature produced in the last 40 years. The first of a long line of books on Murdoch was a business biography that noted that shortly after buying the *News of the World*, Murdoch strongly supported Labour at the 1970 election, an endorsement that surprised its many conservative readers (Regan, 1976, p. 101). Other accounts of Murdoch's early life portray him as a supporter of the British Labour Party. For instance, while at Oxford University he was an active member of the Labour Club (Shawcross, 1992, pp. 67-73). In Adelaide, as a young newspaper proprietor, Murdoch's contact with Australian Labor began.

In his memoirs, former Labor leader Don Dunstan recalls that Murdoch tried to interest him in supporting the breakaway Democratic Labor Party in the late 1950s, an offer Dunstan rejected (Munster, 1985, p. 43).

At the 1963 federal election, using the pages of his newly acquired Sydney newspaper *The Daily Mirror*, Murdoch backed the leader of the Labor Party, Arthur Calwell, whom he had been cultivating for some time (Munster, 1985, p. 71). The following year, he founded the new national daily broadsheet, *The Australian*, which was to be a loss-maker but which gave its owner political clout at the national level. It allowed him, for example, to strongly back the leader of the Country Party, John McEwen, whose protectionist economic policies he then supported (Cryle, 2008, pp. 17-20). By the 1972 election Murdoch switched the support of his newspapers to the Labor leader, Gough Whitlam, not only making financial donations but actively assisting with party publicity and speeches by Whitlam (Oakes & Solomon, 1973, p. 278). Murdoch himself later admitted: 'we all really threw ourselves into the fight, to get a change. It did break twenty years of conservative government. Not a bad thing to do' (Shawcross, 1992, pp. 162-163). Three years later, his newspapers turned on the government and campaigned for its defeat. The conservative parties precipitated a constitutional crisis that culminated in the dismissal of the Whitlam government by the Governor-General, with Murdoch later admitting that his newspapers played a central role in the affair (Kelly, 1995, p. 244).

Reflecting on this early period, one of Murdoch's executives, John Menadue, noted that

“ [Murdoch] was and still is, a frustrated politician. He can't leave politics alone ... working with him for seven years I saw what drove him. It was not making money, as useful as that was, but gaining acceptance by and then influence with people in positions of power (Menadue, 1999, pp. 89-90). ”

This desire to make a political impact continued as Murdoch acquired newspapers in both Britain and the United States. His most powerful acquisition, *The Sun*, supported Labour in the early 1970s, switching to Margaret Thatcher's conservatives at the watershed election of 1979 where it remained until 1997. The extreme behaviour of *The Sun* at the 1992 British election branded Murdoch as a highly political media owner as nothing had previously done. One day before the election, *The Sun* contained four double-page spreads labeled 'Nightmare on Kinnock Street', including one reporting that a 'psychic' found that Labour was backed by Mao Tse Tung, Karl Marx, and Joseph Stalin while the Conservatives were backed by Queen Victoria, Elvis Presley, and Winston Churchill (McKnight, 2012, p. 168). At the end of the election *The Sun* crowed, 'IT'S THE SUN WOT WON IT'. While media scholars debated whether this declaration was accurate or not, Greenslade (2003, pp. 606-607) argues that the 1992 campaign was the 'culmination of a much longer process' of vilification of Labour leader Neil Kinnock in which *The Sun* played a crucial role.

While Murdoch heavily intervened in many elections, his role in the British elections of 1997, 2001 and 2005, in which he supported Tony Blair's Labour Party, is perhaps best known. Of the Labour government's behaviour during this time, one of Blair's advisers later noted that Murdoch was like 'the 24th member of cabinet. His voice was rarely heard ... but his presence was always felt' (Price, 2006). Based on the Blair experience, some have concluded that Murdoch is politically even-handed and trades support according to his commercial interests (Arsenault & Castells, 2008). But Tiffen (2014, p. 140) argues that his support for conservatives is always full-blooded, while his support for non-conservatives is 'qualified and tepid' by comparison (see also McKnight & Hobbs, 2011).

Murdoch's support for Labour under Blair was not unprecedented. In Australia some of Murdoch's key newspapers had supported Bob Hawke's Labor government at the 1984 and 1987 elections. Some attributed the 1987 endorsement to the government's acquiescence to Murdoch's purchase of a rival newspaper chain, the *Herald and Weekly Times* group, that massively expanded his control of newspapers (Chadwick, 1989, pp. 205-207). From the 1996 election until the 2004 election, Murdoch's newspapers favoured the conservative Coalition leader, John Howard. In 2007 some of Murdoch's newspapers, including Sydney's *The Daily Telegraph*, cautiously endorsed Kevin Rudd (Harrison, 2007; Manne, 2011, p. 61).

In the United States, Murdoch's major newspaper, the once liberal-leaning *New York Post*, supported the Republican Party presidential candidates, commencing with Ronald Reagan in 1980 and then again in 1984 (McKnight, 2012, p. 76). But Murdoch has also personally favoured right-wing mavericks, not just mainstream Republicans. At the 1988 election he supported TV evangelist Pat Robertson (rather than George Bush senior), while in 1992 he supported Ross Perot, a maverick whose campaign split the conservative vote helping Democrat Bill Clinton to win (Neil, 1996, p. 166). But from the mid-1990s Murdoch's most powerful American interventions have been expressed by the cable channel, Fox News. The channel supported George W. Bush at the elections of both 2000 and 2004. Indeed, the head of Fox News, Roger Ailes, was a former adviser to the Republicans and privately advised Bush on handling the aftermath of the September 11 attack (Collins, 2004). Fox News also campaigned against Barack Obama at the 2008 and 2012 elections. After Obama's first electoral success, Fox News hired a range of Republican candidates as paid commentators as well as sponsoring the extremist 'Tea Party' (Tiffen, 2014, p. 225, pp. 244-45). Fox News has been the subject of a number of academic

studies, including the quality of its news coverage of the invasion of Iraq (Kull, Ramsay, & Lewis, 2003) and its bias towards interviewing conservative political voices (Conway, Grabe, & Grieves, 2007, pp. 197-223) and favouring the outlook of the Republican Party (Morris, 2007).

Rupert Murdoch's relationship with the Australian Labor Party from 2007 to 2013

Before and after the election of November 2007, the Labor leaders, Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard, both sought the support or neutrality of Rupert Murdoch and his editors. As Robert Manne (2011) has documented, in 2007 Rudd won the support of Chris Mitchell, editor-in-chief of *The Australian* and Rudd also met with Rupert Murdoch in New York in April 2007. Afterwards, Murdoch gave Rudd a lukewarm endorsement, telling journalists he was 'sure' Rudd would make a good prime minister but that he would need to wait and see (Moses & Walsh, 2007).

By the time of the 2007 election campaign, Murdoch was still lukewarm, and Chris Mitchell has stated that he personally had to convince Murdoch to allow *The Australian* to endorse Labor (Manne, 2011, p. 61). Otherwise Murdoch seemed indifferent to Kevin Rudd and clearly did not instruct all of his editors on a pro- or anti-Labor stance. This is reflected in their editorial pages on the day of the election. Several newspapers endorsed Kevin Rudd, including *The Australian*, *The Courier-Mail*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Mercury* and the *NT News*. However, other major News Corp publications supported conservative prime minister John Howard, including the *Herald Sun* and Adelaide's *The Advertiser* (Harrison, 2007).

For his first two years in office, Kevin Rudd enjoyed strong approval ratings in the opinion polls (Coorey, 2009; *Australian Financial Review*, 2010). With the advent of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) in the second half of 2008, Rudd's relationship with the Murdoch press deteriorated, particularly in regards to *The Australian*. By June 2009, Rudd claimed that *The Australian* had published more than 60 articles that attacked or misrepresented his essay for *The Monthly* magazine in which he criticised the role of neoliberal economics in causing the GFC (Manne, 2011, p. 68). Rudd was also unhappy about the Murdoch media's treatment of his government's 'Building the Education Revolution' (BER) economic stimulus program (MacCallum, 2009).

In September 2009 Rudd arranged a private meeting with Murdoch in New York (Shanahan, 2009). If currying favour was his goal, it appeared to fail. In early February 2010, Rudd angered News Corp's senior Australian executives by providing financial assistance to the commercial free-to-air television networks (Elliott & Chessell, 2010). This decision, ostensibly justified to help produce Australian television content in a period of financial difficulty, seemingly rewarded Rupert Murdoch's direct competitors, potentially having an adverse impact on the market expansion of his pay-TV provider Foxtel (50 percent owned by News Corporation). The then head of Murdoch's pay-TV operations in Australia, Kim Williams, attacked the decision as 'another handout on top of the protections the free-to-air networks already enjoy' (Elliott & Chessell, 2010). When Murdoch visited Australia later in February, he snubbed Prime Minister Rudd and decided instead to have a breakfast meeting with the then leader of the Coalition, Tony Abbott, who thereafter began campaigning against the free-TV rebate (Murphy, 2010).

As 2010 progressed, the relationship between Rudd and the Murdoch press continued to sour. Some of News Corp's targets were justifiable, such as its exposure of the failings of the government's stimulatory home insulation policy which resulted in numerous house fires and the deaths of four contractors (Baskin, Murray & Scott, 2013). Other anti-Rudd policy campaigns seemed to be more hypocritical, such as *The Australian's* attacks on Rudd for abandoning his Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) after he failed to negotiate the policy's passage through the Senate (which the newspaper had previously called on the government to abandon – see Manne, 2011, p. 72).

The most damaging anti-Rudd campaign by News Corp took place in May and June 2010 over the government's plan to introduce a new tax on the mining industry, the Resource Super Profits Tax (RSPT). On this policy reform *The Australian* led the Murdoch press in framing it as damaging to the nation's economy (see Gilding et al., 2012; Manne, 2011, p. 73). This media coverage ran in parallel with an extensive advertising campaign from the mining industry (McKnight & Hobbs, 2013). Together this negative media coverage of the RSPT significantly affected Prime Minister Rudd's approval rating and created conditions for his replacement by his deputy, Julia Gillard, on 24 June 2010.

The Gillard government and its relationship with the Murdoch press

After calling an election for 21 August 2010, Prime Minister Julia Gillard reached out to senior editors at News Corp, reportedly contacting Neil Breen, editor of *The Sunday Telegraph*, to successfully seek his editorial endorsement (see Crook, 2013). Other Murdoch newspapers also endorsed Gillard, including the *Sunday Herald Sun*, Adelaide's *The Advertiser*, Hobart's *The Mercury* and the *NT News*. However, News Corp's most influential newspapers chose instead to endorse Tony Abbott's Liberal-National Party coalition, with *The Australian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, the *Herald Sun*, and *The Courier-Mail* urging voters to support the Coalition on election day

(Tatnell, 2010). Fairfax newspapers were also split on whether the public should vote for Labor or the Coalition, with *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* endorsing Labor, and the *Australian Financial Review* endorsing the Coalition (Tatnell, 2010).

The election resulted in Labor and the Coalition each winning 72 seats in the 150-seat House of Representatives (four seats short of a majority) (Gordon, Munro & Darby, 2010). After three independent MPs and a Greens MP chose to support the formation of a Labor minority government, *The Australian* led the Murdoch press in running an aggressive campaign seemingly to damage the reputations of the independent MPs, and Rob Oakeshott in particular. Later, the then chief executive of News Limited (which became 'News Corp Australia' in 2013) John Hartigan, acknowledged that his organisation's coverage of Rob Oakeshott and the other independent MPs had been 'aggressive' and let slip that 'the company' disliked the 'leadership vacuum' created by a 'minority government' (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2011).

Murdoch's newspapers also aggressively attacked the Australian Greens, now a formal ally of the Gillard government. When the Greens leader, Bob Brown, complained about the biased representations of his party in the Murdoch press, *The Australian* stated that it was proud of its attempts to destroy the parliamentary alliance between Labor and the Greens, and declared that the Greens 'should be destroyed at the ballot box' (*The Australian*, 2010). Rupert Murdoch echoed these views. In October, Murdoch told a journalist that the 'bloody Greens' were a clear threat to Australia's continued economic prosperity (Dusevic, 2010).

In May 2011, Murdoch held one of his regular global meetings for senior editorial staff at his private home in Carmel Valley, California. At this meeting Murdoch made it clear that he disliked minority governments and was more favourably disposed towards the leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, than to the current prime minister (Guthrie, 2011; Guthrie, 2013; Wright, 2011). Shortly after the May gathering in Carmel Valley, News Corp's newspapers began a more aggressive campaign directly against the Gillard government (Guthrie, 2011; *Media Watch*, 2011a). Later, the government's proposed policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the carbon price (or 'carbon tax') was increasingly being presented in a negative manner (*Media Watch*, 2011a).

In September 2011, with the Gillard government and the Murdoch press now clearly at loggerheads², the government launched the Independent Media Inquiry (known as the 'Finkelstein Inquiry') headed by former Federal Court judge Ray Finkelstein. The background justification for this inquiry was the unfolding phone-hacking scandal in the United Kingdom. However, some journalists in Australia saw the announcement as an attempt to rein in the anti-Gillard government campaign that continued to run in some of News Corp's major newspapers. While then-Communications Minister Stephen Conroy denied he was specifically targeting the Murdoch press, he bluntly stated that *The Daily Telegraph* was indeed biased and that the Press Council, the industry's self-regulator, was a 'toothless tiger' incapable of correcting blatantly slanted coverage (Thompson, 2011; *Media Watch*, 2011b).

The phone-hacking scandal meant that Rupert Murdoch was largely absent from Australian politics in much of 2012 (Barry, 2013). News Corp, however, continued its outbursts of provocative journalism, such as when *The Australian* ran a front page cartoon that represented the Prime Minister and her Treasurer as communists, under the headline 'SMASH THE RICH, SAVE THE BASE', in response to the 2012 federal budget. Then, with some notable exceptions, in 2012 News Corp appeared to tone down its overt editorialising against the Gillard government as it waited for the outcomes from the phone-hacking inquiries in the United Kingdom and the Finkelstein Inquiry in Australia.

This truce ended in March 2013 when Senator Stephen Conroy accepted some of the recommendations of the Finkelstein Inquiry, including the establishment of a new watchdog, the Public Interest Media Advocate (PIMA), to ensure that media companies complied with independent journalism standards (*Media Watch* 2013a; Uhlmann, 2013). The PIMA would also have the power to prevent the further concentration of media ownership by applying a public interest test to company takeovers and mergers.

In response to the proposed media reforms, the Murdoch press went on the offensive. News Limited's new chief executive Kim Williams (who had replaced John Hartigan in late 2011) angrily denounced the proposed media laws as a 'sad day for Australian democracy' and as 'heinous' attack on free speech (*Media Watch*, 2013a; Griffiths, 2013). On its front page, *The Daily Telegraph* visually compared Senator Conroy to the world's most notorious dictators, digitally manipulating his image so that he morphed into Joseph Stalin. Ultimately the proposed media reforms regarding the PIMA were abandoned, just prior to Prime Minister Julia Gillard facing another challenge to her leadership (this time from a minister acting on behalf of Kevin Rudd). Julia Gillard's consistently poor standing in the opinion polls during this period ensured leadership speculation remained a topic of ongoing media interest and a source of ongoing tension between the government and News Corp (Walsh, 2013). Rupert Murdoch made his views on the Gillard government clear when he tweeted on 20 May: 'Oz polls show nothing can save this miserable govt. Election cannot come soon enough. People decided and tuned out months ago' (*Media Watch*, 2013b).

On the 26 June 2013, Kevin Rudd replaced Julia Gillard as prime minister after a successful leadership challenge. This dramatic leadership contest would capture the attention of Rupert Murdoch, who tweeted: 'Australian public now totally disgusted with Labor Party wrecking the country with it's [sic] sordid intrigues. Now for a quick election' (Manne, 2013, p. 28). However, in contrast to Murdoch's conviction that the Australian public was 'disgusted' with Labor, Rudd's return had a positive impact on Labor's standing in the opinion polls (Hawker, 2013, pp. 62-63). As Rudd's chief political strategist and adviser, Bruce Hawker, has since revealed in his diary, News Corp did not immediately return to their previous anti-Labor campaign when Rudd was returned as prime minister, despite some instances of 'biased and ugly reporting' following the initial change in the leadership (Hawker, 2013, p. 66). Indeed, Rudd's media team even sought to reach out to the once hostile Murdoch press, offering important stories exclusively to *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Australian* in attempt to regain the neutrality of News Corp (Hawker, 2013, pp 67-83).

This suspension of hostilities between the government and News Corp came to a clear end in late July 2013. On 26 July, News Corporation's chief executive, Robert Thomson, announced that *The Daily Telegraph's* former editor, Col Allan, would be returning to Australia from Murdoch's *New York Post*. In a letter to News Corp's employees that was leaked to the media, Thomson explained that Col Allan was being dispatched to Australia to provide 'extra editorial leadership' (Sheehan, 2013). Before long Rudd's advisers were hearing reports that Allan had held a series of meetings with senior newspaper editors and instructed them that, with Rudd's revival in the opinion polls, they were to go hard against him and the government (Hawker, 2013, pp. 128-129; Sheehan, 2013). As far as News Corp was concerned, the 2013 election campaign was underway and Kevin Rudd posed a significant threat to Murdoch's preferred candidate.

From 1 August 2013 many of News Corp's most politically significant newspapers began a seemingly coordinated campaign against Kevin Rudd (Manne, 2013). Notable examples of anti-Rudd front page headlines and stories from this period include *The Courier-Mail's* 'OH BROTHER WHERE ART THOU'; the *Herald Sun's* 'RUDD'S LAST GASP'; *Courier-Mail's* 'KEV'S \$733 MILLION BANK HEIST' (which also depicted Rudd as a masked bandit). From the weekend of 3-4 August, other examples include the *Herald Sun's* 'IT'S A RUDDY MESS', with its Sunday edition following with: 'RUDD BOAT HELL'. Saturday's edition of *The Daily Telegraph* opined: 'THE PRICE OF LABOR', with the Sunday edition claiming: 'IT'S ABOUT TIME: Western Sydney ready for day of reckoning' (the election was announced on Sunday August 4). *The Courier-Mail* had a similar theme for their front-page: 'DOESN'T ADD UP', followed by 'ISLAND HELL: RUDD CHANGES HIS MIND AGAIN'. In Adelaide, *The Advertiser* declared 'RUDD'S CARR WRECK' (a story critical of Labor minister Kim Carr and the party's industrial policies). These stories set the tone for what would be a tempestuous campaign.

The 2013 election campaign

The opening of the 2013 election campaign on 4 August sparked the striking headline 'KICK THIS MOB OUT' in *The Daily Telegraph*. On the same day Murdoch tweeted 'Oz politics! We all like ideal of NBN, especially perfect for Foxtel. But first how can it be financed in present situation?' The reference to the National Broadband Network (NBN) was the cue for an immediate response by Rudd that Murdoch's hostility was motivated by his opposition to the NBN which, Rudd said, threatened his Foxtel 'cash cow'. As well as attacking Murdoch, Rudd mentioned that he owned '70 percent of the newspapers in this country' (Coorey & Massola, 2013).

The accusation that Murdoch was threatened by broadband, continued through the campaign. It was based on the prediction that universal access to broadband would allow sporting bodies such as football codes to directly stream their games to consumers, cutting out intermediaries such as Foxtel – in this way it would be similar to the desertion of advertising from newspapers to the internet. These accusations were a remarkable way for a political leader to open an election campaign. To attack one of the main media owners was 'a decidedly high risk strategy' said a former News Corp editor, Bruce Guthrie, who added that this was all the more so because 'News does not play fair' (Guthrie, 2013).

This proved to be the case. In the following week, News Corp's tabloids in different cities – but especially in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne – echoed the tone of the 'Kick this mob out' headline. On the following day, Tuesday 6 August, the *Herald Sun* ran 'CASH SPLASH' criticising Labor's '\$700m spending spree' and Adelaide's *The Advertiser's* headline was 'RUNNING ON EMPTY', which criticised Labor's car industry policies. On the Wednesday, most headlines highlighted Abbott's promise to cut taxes. On Thursday 8 August, *The Daily Telegraph* returned to hyperbolic form with a digitally-manipulated image depicting Labor leaders in Nazi uniforms with the headline 'I KNOW NUTHINK!' (a reference to a TV comedy *Hogan's Heroes*). This prompted Kevin Rudd to underline the Murdoch-Abbott link, pointing out that the Coalition's broadband policy was launched at Sydney's Fox Studios (Daley, Massola & Mather, 2013).

The following day, *The Courier-Mail's* front page headline was 'SEND IN THE CLOWN', an attack on Rudd's announcement that former Queensland Labor leader Peter Beattie would stand as a federal MP. Rudd immediately returned fire, this time invoking the presence in Australia of the editor-in-chief of the *New York Post*, Col Allan. Rudd accused Allan of coordinating a campaign against him, stating '[w]hat you see is a fairly

consistent, not universally, but fairly consistent pattern' (Wright, 2013). The reason for Rudd's unusual strategy of confronting Murdoch publicly was based on overseas examples. One Labor source explained that 'Obama took on Murdoch and he won ... Gordon Brown [the former British Labour prime minister] didn't and he lost. We've decided you have to stand up to bullies' (Allard, 2013).

Over the second, third and fourth weeks of the five-week election campaign (i.e. from 12-31 August), there were many front page headlines in Murdoch tabloids that were intensely anti-Labor. Not a single headline was anti-Coalition and several positively promoted plans by the Coalition. *The Courier-Mail* was especially notable with 'PARACHUTE PETE' on 20 August, continuing its campaign against Labor candidate Peter Beattie; 'DOES THIS GUY EVER SHUT UP?' on 22 August which was a quote from Tony Abbott directed at Rudd; and 'TIME TO ZIP', another reference to Rudd made plain by an accompanying photo (24 August). *The Daily Telegraph* ran several anti-Labor headlines, though none reached the ferocity of 'KICK THIS MOB OUT'. On 19 August it claimed 'ALBANESE BLOWS BILLIONS ON AIRPORT CURFEW' and on 21 August its front page featured an actor in a Labor advertisement with the headline, 'UNMASKED: ALP'S 'SOUR SUSIE' NOT EXACTLY A BATTLER'. On 23 August *The Telegraph* ran two anti-Labor stories on its front page. One predicted Labor faced a wipeout in Western Sydney ('ALP LOSING ITS HEART') and another reporting the complaints of a make-up artist who claimed Rudd was rude to her. On 25 August, *The Sunday Telegraph* had a similar story, 'RUDD'S KITCHEN RULES', which said Rudd claimed to suspend his campaign for a briefing on Syria while actually making time for an interview on a TV cooking show.

In the crucial last week of the campaign, debate over News Corp's media bias re-surfaced. The activist group *GetUp!* made a TV advertisement attacking bias in Murdoch's newspapers. After screening for four days on Channel Nine in Brisbane, the advertisement was banned by all commercial TV networks (*Media Watch*, 2013d). The last week also saw Kevin Rudd renew his attack on Murdoch, referring to 'the blatant bias of the Murdoch press'. He added, 'I've taken it head-on and I think Australians have been waiting for someone to do that for a long time' (Gordon, 2013). In contrast, Tony Abbott defended Murdoch, stating 'I've got a lot of time for Rupert Murdoch ... he's one of the most influential Australians of all time and ... we should support our hometown heroes' (*Media Watch*, 2013d).

The headlines of the Murdoch tabloids in the last week of the campaign (Sunday September 1 to Saturday 7) suggest Rudd's claim of a consistent pattern of bias was accurate. On Sunday 1 September the *Sydney Sunday Telegraph's* front page was bluntly headlined: 'AUSTRALIA NEEDS TONY' with Tony Abbott's face against a background of the Australian flag. A box pointing to the paper's editorial on page 9 made it clear (if there was any doubt) that the headline was an editorial endorsement, and not a news story. In Brisbane, *The Sunday Mail*, the Sunday edition of *The Courier-Mail*, ran the headline 'RUDD NEEDS A MIRACLE' with an accompanying article that Kevin Rudd is 'sliding towards election defeat'. While this could be explained as a legitimate news story based on polling, given *The Courier-Mail's* earlier use of its front page to oppose to Labor, it was also part of a pattern.

Labor's campaign launch occurred on Sunday 1 September so the front pages of Monday's newspapers were largely concerned with this. While some, including the Murdoch newspapers, were neutral ('RUDD COMES OUT SWINGING AS ABBOTT SURGES', said *The Daily Telegraph*) the *Courier-Mail's* view of the launch was expressed by the major headline, 'THE LONG GOODBYE' with the minor headline: 'Rudd embraces the heartland in his last hurrah'. The *Herald Sun* simply ignored Labor's launch on its front page, though it did include a pointer box to an article 'RECKLESS RUDD IN FREE FALL' (which was directing readers to an article by conservative columnist Andrew Bolt: 'LIGHT ON THE HILL IS A DIM CANDLE').

On Tuesday 3 September, *The Courier-Mail* ran two stories critical of Labor in its front page. One story portrayed an 88-year-old Labor voter who would not be voting Labor this time ('JACK TO GIVE KEV THE BOOT'). The other story ('REWRITING HISTORY') highlighted Tony Abbott's pledge to eliminate 'left-wing values' in the school curriculum. The latter story was also on the front page of the *Herald Sun* ('Class war'). *The Daily Telegraph* contained a large photo of a smiling people smuggler waving cash to the camera, with the headline 'FIST FULL OF CASH' with a secondary headline: 'The selfie Kevin Rudd doesn't want you to see'. Other newspapers gave little prominence to the election on their front pages. On Wednesday 4 September, *The Daily Telegraph* ran the pro-Abbott, 'THE WINNER IS SYDNEY' with a subsidiary headline 'Abbott vows to champion his home town'. On Thursday 5 September, with the election nearing, several Murdoch tabloids published anti-Labor front page stories. *The Courier-Mail* continued its stance with a headline 'RUDD FREE ZONE', relating to Abbott's 'pre-election blitz around Brisbane today'. *The Daily Telegraph* ran a secondary front page headline, 'Abbott vows to cut futile research' which highlighted 'millions of dollars in taxpayer funded grants for obscure research projects'. *The Adelaide Advertiser*, which had been notable for its lack of anti-Labor headlines, ran the same story more prominently with the major headline stating, 'ABBOTT'S WASTE DISPOSAL'. Having also ignored the election to this point, Murdoch's Darwin-based *NT News* front page portrayed a 'psychic croc' that picked Abbott to win. This crocodile story was widely published by other News Corp publications as well as non-Murdoch outlets such as the online news site Ninemsm.

On the eve of the election, Friday 6 September, the *Herald Sun* ran its editorial on the front page with the headline 'TONY'S TIME', with a ringing endorsement from the newspaper. *The Courier-Mail* ran a visually striking image of a spotlight on a stage containing a forlorn clown's hat. The headline read 'THE CIRCUS IS OVER', recalling its earlier headline attack on Labor, 'SEND IN THE CLOWN'. This story also had a prominent 'editorial extract' that proclaimed that 'More than any recent Opposition leader, Mr Abbott has earned a chance to prove himself as Prime Minister'. Other Murdoch newspapers ran versions of last-minute polls predicting Labor's defeat, which was again legitimate coverage.

On the day of the election, Saturday 7 September, all major newspapers ran headlines based on the likelihood of a Labor defeat. *The Daily Telegraph* ran a long front page headline referring to 'six years of an incompetent Labor government' and then suggested to readers it was 'YOUR TURN' (the most prominent headline). Rupert Murdoch tweeted: 'Aust election public sick of public sector workers and phony welfare scroungers sucking life out of economy' and later "'Tele wot won it"! No, Australians just sick of Gillard-Rudd incompetence and infighting wrecking great county [sic]' ³.

Conclusion

This study has suggested that although several Murdoch newspapers supported the election of the Labor government in 2007, this quickly began to change after the stimulatory economic measures used by Labor to deal with the Global Finance Crisis of 2008-09. Murdoch's newspapers campaigned against these measures claiming that much of the spending on schools and home insulation was wasted or, in the insulation case, so inept that it led to several deaths and many fires. Rupert Murdoch's Australian arm was also in conflict with the Labor government over the latter's financial support for the free-to-air TV networks which, it was claimed, disadvantaged Murdoch's Foxtel pay-TV operation. Other significant anti-Labor campaigns concerned the introduction of the mining tax, the carbon price, the National Broadband Network and the proposed media reforms, all of which can be seen as examples of 'Big Government' interfering in the workings of different markets and thus policies which are antithetical to one of Murdoch's most enduring ideological enthusiasms (McKnight, 2003).

Against this background, this article has also demonstrated that News Corp newspapers campaigned vigorously against the re-election of the Labor government in 2013. Both in their editorials and via their news coverage (suggested by their front page headlines), the Murdoch press provided slanted coverage that favoured Tony Abbott and the Liberal-National Party coalition. As Robert Manne (2013) has noted, while there are necessary regional differences in News Corp's coverage of federal politics, the company's syndication of right-wing columnists, 'editorial guidance' and 'anticipatory compliance' by journalists have helped to create a single 'political voice' that makes News Corp Australia a powerful political instrument. Did they, then, succeed in influencing their readers at the 2013 election? This study does not pretend to provide proof that News Corp newspapers swayed voters on the day of the election (an investigation beyond the scope of this article).

However, we believe there is an arguable case that the Murdoch newspapers may well have helped set an agenda for the election campaign, by their selection and presentation of issues. This may have occurred directly through its influence on its readership, but it may have also occurred because of 'inter-media agenda-setting'. Studies of inter-media agenda-setting suggest that newspapers have a powerful influence on the news agenda of television and other media (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Atwater, Fico, & Pizante, 1987; Golan, 2006). In the case of Australia, News Corp dominates the newspaper industry. This continuing dominance was underlined by a new study during the election campaign which found that News Corp titles account for 59 per cent of daily newspaper sales nationwide and 65 per cent of capital city and national daily newspapers which, the study said, 'are by far the most influential in setting the news agenda' (Flew & Goldsmith, 2013). The study also pointed out that 14 of the 21 metro daily and Sunday newspapers were owned by News Corp, making the Australian newspaper market 'among the most concentrated in the democratic world'.

Bruce Hawker's (2013, p. 208) insights into News Corp's influence on Rudd's election campaign conform to the agenda-setting model of media power. Hawker, who was the Prime Minister's chief political strategist during the election, argues that the 'storm of negative stories emanating from News Corp', some of which he claims were unsubstantiated or deliberate misrepresentations, blew 'their campaign off course'. For Hawker (2013, pp. 136-137) these anti-Rudd news stories: (1) provided daily ammunition for right-wing radio shock jocks; (2) diverted attention from the serious issues the Prime Minister wished to discuss; (3) represented Rudd as 'off message' and 'chaotic'; and (4) allowed Tony Abbott to stay positive throughout the campaign, as News Corp was doing the political attacks on Rudd's personality and policies. In choosing to report trivial stories of Rudd's supposed rudeness to a make-up artist or by attacking him for using notes in a debate, Hawker argues that News Corp took control of the national political conversation, forcing Rudd to respond to their news agenda rather than being able to adequately explain his own plans for the nation. News Corp's columnists also attacked Rudd's personality and mannerisms, describing him variously as 'venomous', 'narcissistic', 'vain', 'fake', 'manipulative' and a 'psychopath' (Manne, 2013, pp. 22-23). In doing so they undermined Rudd's credibility and legitimacy, and reinforced some of the negative images of the Labor government that had been promoted by

News Corp since 2010. Collectively these representations may have helped to align at least some of the public behind Tony Abbott and the Coalition during the election.

There are, then, two outcomes from Murdoch's support of the Coalition's campaign. The first concerns News Corp's future investment opportunities in Australia. Rupert Murdoch's support for the Coalition may result in the development of a *quid pro quo* relationship with the Abbott government, which might be used to defend or expand News Corp's market share⁴. The second outcome from the election concerns Murdoch's professed passion for politics and the thrill that comes from the execution of media power. Like his father before him, Murdoch has long enjoyed playing a role in deciding who should lead the nation. As he candidly admitted in an interview with the ABC in 1967: 'Of course one enjoys the feeling of power' that newspapers give their proprietor (cited in *Media Watch*, 2013b). With News Corporation having been first 'besieged' and then 'humbled' in Britain as a result of the phone-hack inquires (Barry, 2013), the ageing media mogul likely viewed the Australian federal election as a cathartic opportunity to prove, once again, that he is still a kingmaker.

Notes

1 On 28 June 2013, News Corporation was split into two publicly traded companies, '21st Century Fox' and the 'new News Corp', with the former focused on broadcasting and the latter on publishing. As part of this split, News Corporation's Australian subsidiary, News Limited, was renamed 'News Corp Australia' on 1 July 2013. In this article 'News Corp' is used to refer to the Australian subsidiary, which continues to be part of Rupert Murdoch's restructured new News Corporation.

2 In December 2011, Prime Minister Gillard further angered executives at News Corp by cancelling the tender process for the Australia Network and awarding the service back to the ABC (Murphy, 2011). The Gillard government would later pay Sky News Australia (part owned by News Corporation via its stake in BSkyB) \$2 million in compensation (Shanahan, 2012). In May 2014, the Abbott government announced funding cuts to the ABC and the closure of the Australia Network (Meade, 2014).

3 A post-election study by the ABC's *Media Watch* program found that *The Daily Telegraph* published 293 political stories during the election campaign. Of these stories, only six were pro-Labor, while 43 were pro-Coalition (*Media Watch*, 2013c). Of the negative stories, five articles were anti-Coalition, while 134 were anti-Labor (with the rest categorised as neutral) (*Media Watch*, 2013c). Official editorial endorsements also strongly favoured the Coalition, with all of the major capital city newspapers encouraging readers to vote for the Coalition, with the exception of Melbourne's *The Age* and *The Guardian Australia*.

4 One year on since the election of the Abbott government, it appears that News Corp might soon benefit from policy reforms. In June 2014, Prime Minister Abbott met with Rupert Murdoch in New York (Knott and Ireland, 2014). While the details of this discussion remain private, the government has subsequently indicated it is considering reforming media ownership laws, which could see News Corp expand into new sectors or Foxtel gain greater access to broadcasting rights for sports events currently on the anti-siphoning list, which guarantees certain sports to free-to-air TV (White, 2014). The Abbott government has also indicated it plans to implement policies which will allow 'a major crackdown' on the online piracy of movies and television shows, a reform that would likely increase the number of customers for Foxtel (Knott, 2014). Irrespective of whether these specific potential policy reforms eventuate, Abbott's relationship with Murdoch remains strong, with the Prime Minister giving a speech at the 50th anniversary of *The Australian* in July 2014, in which he praised the newspaper's commitment to 'small government' and called it one of the 'best newspapers' in the world (Abbott, 2014).

References

- Abbott, T. (2014, 16 July). One of the world's very best newspapers. *The Australian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/opinion/one-of-the-worlds-very-best-newspapers/story-e6frgd0x-1226990209854>
- Allard, T. (2013, 10 August). Mauled Rudd takes on Murdoch hounds, *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/federal-election-2013/mauled-rudd-takes-on-murdoch-hounds-20130809-2rnee.html>
- Arsenault, A., & Castells, M. (2008). Switching power: Rupert Murdoch and the global business of media politics – a sociological analysis. *International Sociology* 23(4), 488–513. doi: 10.1177/0268580908090725
- Atwater, T., Fico, F., & Pizante (1987). Reporting on the State Legislature: A Case Study of the Inter-media Agenda-Setting. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 8(2), 53-62.
- Australian Broadcasting Corporation (2011, 14 July). News Ltd CEO defends staff amid hacking scandal. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-07-14/hartigan-speaks-to-73a30-about-aust-media/2795416>

- Barry, P. (2013). *Bad News: Sex, Lies and the Murdoch Succession*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Baskin, B., Murray, D., & Scott, S. (2013, 5 July). Insulation scheme tragedy returns to haunt new PM as coroner says dangers were 'obvious'. *The Courier-Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/insulation-scheme-tragedy-returns-to-haunt-new-pm-as-coroner-says-dangers-were-obvious/story-fnihsrf2-1226674565857>
- Chadwick, P. (1989, February). Rupert Murdoch, News Limited and Australian Politics. *News Unlimited Conference*. Sydney: University of Sydney.
- Collins, S. (2004). *Crazy Like a Fox: the Inside Story of How Fox News Beat CNN*, New York, NY: Portfolio.
- Conway, M., Grabe, M. & Grievies, K. (2007). Villains, victims and the virtuous in Bill O'Reilly's "No Spin Zone". *Journalism Studies*, 8(2), 197-223. doi: 10.1080/14616700601148820
- Coorey, P. (2009, 30 March). The Rudd supremacy. *The Brisbane Times*, Retrieved from <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/the-rudd-supremacy-20090330-9g6s.html>
- Coorey, P., & Massola, J. (2013, 7 August). It's Rudd v Murdoch in NBN slugfest, *Australian Financial Review*, Retrieved from http://www.afr.com/p/national/it_rudd_murdoch_in_nbn_slugfest_oZXFoHEQiPOHyYBK932O2O
- Crook, A. (2013, 22 May). The Power Index: election deciders, the tabloid editors at #9. *Crikey*. Retrieved from <http://www.crikey.com.au/2013/05/22/the-power-index-election-deciders-the-tabloid-editors-at-9/>
- Cryle, D. (2008). *Murdoch's Flagship: Twenty Five Years of the Australian Newspaper*, Melbourne, VIC: Melbourne University Press.
- Daley, G., Massola, J., & Mather, J. (2013, 9 August). Rudd denies talk with Murdoch. *Australian Financial Review*. Retrieved from http://www.afr.com/p/national/rudd_denies_talk_with_murdoch_about_gQhAujP4Iy3JkDMvFLIm2H
- Dusevic, T. (2010, 29 October). This is a land of opportunity, says Rupert Murdoch. *The Australian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/this-is-a-land-of-opportunity-says-rupert-murdoch/story-e6frg8zx-1225944915463>
- Elliott, G., & Chessell, J. (2010, 10 February). Kevin Rudd's \$250m lifts TV profits. *The Australian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/media/ruddsbr250mbrlifts-tvbrprofits/story-e6frg996-1225828506347>
- Financial Review (2010, 24 June). Kevin Rudd's polling since 2006. Retrieved from http://www.afr.com/p/national/politics/kevin_rudd_polling_since_HrYcqGKRWwz8liuTQDP2JK
- Flew, T., & Goldsmith, B. (2013, 8 August). FactCheck: Does Murdoch own 70 % of newspapers in Australia? *The Conversation*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/factcheck-does-murdoch-own-70-of-newspapers-in-australia-16812>
- Gilding, M., Merlot, E., Leitch, S., Bunton, V., & Glezos, L. (2012). Media framing of the resources super profits tax. *Australian Journal of Communication*, 39(3), 23-40.
- Golan, G. (2006). Inter-media agenda-setting and global news coverage: assessing the influence of the *New York Times* on three network television evening news programs. *Journalism*, 7(2) 323-334. doi:10.1080/14616700500533643
- Gordon, J., Munro, P., & Darby, A. (2010, 29 August). Independents could go separate ways. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from <http://web.archive.org/web/20100829234213/http://www.smh.com.au/federal-election/independents-could-go-separate-ways-20100828-13wx.html>
- Gordon, M. (2013, 4 September). Rudd calm in fight for his life, *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/federal-election-2013/rudd-calm-in-fight-of-his-life-20130903-2t3ck.html>
- Greenslade, R. (2003). *Press Gang: How Newspapers Make Profits from Propaganda*. London: Macmillan.
- Griffiths, E. (2013, 13 March). News Ltd boss attacks 'Soviet-style' media reforms. *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-03-13/news-ltd-boss-launches-scathing-attack-on-media-reforms/4570592>

Guthrie, B. (2011, 22 May). Mogul in the corner. *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

Retrieved from <http://www.smh.com.au/national/mogul-in-the-corner-20110521-1exun.html> Guthrie, B. (2013, 11 August). It's on: Rudd gets the Col shoulder as Murdoch telegraphs his punches. *The Sunday Age*. Retrieved from <http://www.theage.com.au/comment/its-on-rudd-gets-the-col-shoulder-as-murdoch-telegraphs-his-punches-20130810-2rp47.html>

Harrison, R. (2007, 23 November). Election 07: The newspapers' [sic] choice this time round. *Crikey*. Retrieved from <http://www.crikey.com.au/2007/11/23/election-07-the-newspapers-choice-this-time-round/>.

Hawker, B. (2013). *The Rudd Rebellion: the Campaign to Save Labor*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Hobbs, M. (2010). Neo-conned: The Murdoch press and the Iraq War. *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, 6(2), 187-207.

Kelly, P. (1995). *November 1975: The Inside Story on Australia's Greatest Political Crisis*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Knott, M. (2014, 14 February). George Brandis signals government crackdown on online piracy. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/george-brandis-signals-government-crackdown-on-online-piracy-20140214-32q62.html>

Knott, M. and Ireland, J. (2014, 12 June). Media ownership reform call comes as Tony Abbott dines with Rupert Murdoch. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/media-ownership-reform-call-comes-as-tony-abbott-dines-with-rupert-murdoch-20140611-39xs1.html>

Kull, S., Ramsay, C., & Lewis, E. (2003). Misperceptions, the media, and the Iraq war. *Political Science Quarterly*, 118(4), 569-598.

Leys, N. (2013, 6 August). Telegraph does it again this time on day one. *The Australian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/election-2013/telegraph-does-it-again-this-time-on-day-one/story-fn9qr68y-1226691690220#mm-premium>

MacCallum, M. (2009, September). Comment: Rudd and the Murdoch Press. *The Monthly*. Retrieved from <http://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2009/september/1271316043/mungo-maccallum/comment>

Manne, R. (2011). Bad news: Murdoch's Australian and the shaping of the nation. *Quarterly Essay*, Issue 43, pp. 1-115.

Manne, R. (2013). The power of one: why Rupert Murdoch cannot be stopped. *The Monthly*, Issue 95, November, pp. 22-29.

McKnight, D. (2003). "A World Hungry for a New Philosophy": Rupert Murdoch and the rise of neo-liberalism. *Journalism Studies*, 4(3), 347-358. doi: 10.1080/14616700306493

McKnight, D. (2012). *Rupert Murdoch: an Investigation of Political Power*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

McKnight, D., & Hobbs, M. (2011). 'You're all a bunch of pinkos': Rupert Murdoch and the politics of HarperCollins. *Media, Culture & Society*, 33(6), 835-850.

McKnight, D., & Hobbs, M. (2013). Public contest through the popular media: The mining industry's advertising war against the Australian Labor government. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 48(3), 307-319. doi:10.1080/10361146.2013.821101

Meade, A. (2014, 14 May). Budget: 80 ABC staff out of work in 90 days as Australia Network closes ABC chief suggests Abbott government had decided to axe the network while still in opposition. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/14/budget-80-abc-staff-out-of-work-in-90-days-as-australia-network-closes>

Media Watch (2011a, 18 July). When the news doesn't fit the agenda. *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s3272258.htm>

Media Watch (2011b, 19 September). One regulator to rule them all. *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s3321170.htm>

Media Watch (2013a, 18 March). Sober and disciplined discussion. *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s3718330.htm>

Media Watch (2013b, 26 August). Rupert Tweets, the Tele repeats. *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s3834127.htm>

Media Watch (2013c, 9 September). The Tele's final tall. *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s3844761.htm>

Media Watch (2013d, 9 September). The ad that didn't get up. *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s3844762.htm>

Menadue, J. (1999). *Things You Learn Along the Way*. Melbourne: David Lovell Publishing.

Morris, J. (2007). Slanted objectivity? Perceived media bias, cable news exposure, and political attitudes. *Social Science Quarterly*, 88(3), 707-728. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6237.2007.00479.x

Moses, A., & Walsh, K. (2007, 22 April). When Rudd met Murdoch subject menu was secret. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/when-rudd-met-murdoch-subject-menu-was-secret/2007/04/21/1176697161133.html>

Munster, G. (1985). *A Paper Prince*. Ringwood: Viking.

Murphy, K. (2010, 19 February). Abbott policy switch "after Murdoch chat". *The Age*. Retrieved from <http://www.theage.com.au/national/abbott-policy-switch-after-murdoch-chat-20100218-oiut.html>

Murphy, K. (2011, 6 December). Murdoch barred on overseas TV plan. *The Age*. Retrieved from <http://www.theage.com.au/national/murdoch-barrd-on-overseas-tv-plan-20111205-1ofkz.html>

Neil, A. (1996). *Full Disclosure*. London: Macmillan.

Oakes, L., & Solomon, D. (1973). *The Making of an Australian Prime Minister*. Melbourne: Cheshire.

Price, L. (2006, 1 July). 'Rupert Murdoch is effectively a member of Blair's cabinet'. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2006/jul/01/comment.rupertmurdoch>

Regan, S. (1976). *Rupert Murdoch: a Business Biography*. London: Angus and Robertson.

Shanahan, D. (2009, 22 September). Intimate dinner between Kevin Rudd and Rupert Murdoch covers biggest issues. *The Australian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/news/intimate-dinner-between-kevin-rudd-and-rupert-murdoch-covers-biggest-issues/story-e6frg906-1225777971451>

Shanahan, D. (2012, 3 April). Taxpayers foot \$2m bill to Sky News for Australia Network TV tender bungle. *The Australian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/taxpayers-foot-2m-bill-to-sky-news-for-australia-network-tv-tender-bungle/story-fn59niix-1226316959013>

Shawcross, W. (1992). *Rupert Murdoch: Ringmaster of the information circus*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Sheehan, P. (2013, 4 August). Murdoch's vicious attacks on Rudd: it's business. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/federal-election-2013/murdochs-vicious-attacks-on-rudd-its-business-20130803-2r65x.html>

Shoemaker, P., & Vos, T. (2009). *Gatekeeping theory*. New York: Routledge.

Tatnell, P. (2010, 20 August). Editorials back Coalition in key states. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from <http://web.archive.org/web/20100822125118/http://www.smh.com.au/federal-election/editorials-back-coalition-in-key-states-20100820-12se1.html>

The Australian (2010, 9 September). Needed: A policy for Julia, direction for Labor. Editorial. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/editorials/needed-a-policy-for-julia-direction-for-labor/story-e6frg71x-1225916087426>

Thompson, J. (2011, 15 December). Former judge to head media inquiry. *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-09-14/ex-federal-court-judge-to-head-media-inquiry/2898976>

Tiffen, R. (2014). *Rupert Murdoch: a Reassessment*. Sydney: New South Publishing.

Uhlmann, C. (2013, 13 March). War of words breaks out over media laws. *7.30 Report*, *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2013/s3715048.htm>

Walsh, K. A. (2013). *The Stalking of Julia Gillard: How the Media and Team Rudd Brought Down the Prime Minister*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

White, D. (2014, 10 August). Malcolm Turnbull tests regulation reform with media bosses. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.smh.com.au/business/malcolm-turnbull-tests-regulation-reform-with-media-bosses-20140810-102id0.html>

Wright, T. (2011, 16 July). Politicians of all stripes beat a path to Murdoch's door. *The Age*. Retrieved from <http://www.theage.com.au/national/politicians-of-all-stripes-beat-a-path-to-murdochs-door-20110715-1hi4f.html>

Wright, T. (2013, 10 August). Naked animosity now keeps former strip club mates Rudd and 'Col Pot' poles apart. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/federal-election-2013/naked-animosity-now-keeps-former-strip-club-mates-rudd-and-col-pot-poles-apart-20130809-2rnji.html>

About the authors

Dr Mitchell Hobbs is a Lecturer in media studies at the University of Sydney. He is the author of several studies on media power, political communication, and the politics of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

Email: mitchell.hobbs@sydney.edu.au

Postal address: Department of Media and Communications, the University of Sydney, NSW 2006

Associate Professor David McKnight is a Senior Research Fellow in the School of the Arts and Media at the University of New South Wales. He is the author of several books including *Rupert Murdoch: An Investigation of Political Power* (Allen & Unwin, 2012) and *Beyond Right and Left: New Politics and the Culture War* (Allen & Unwin, 2005).

Email: d.mcknight@unsw.edu.au

Personal profile: <http://www.davidmcknight.com.au/>